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131

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ISSUE 131

WELCOME



Welcome to the latest issue of **Advanced Photoshop**. This issue we explore the latest updates to Photoshop CC and show you how you can use its features to work smarter and faster.

APRIL MADDEN
Editor

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ARCH-VIS
- COMPOSITING
- PHOTOMANIPULATION
- DIGITAL PAINTING
- CC APPS

We have 45 tips for you on how you can improve your workflow in CC, from nifty quick tricks to taking advantage of the powerful new tools contained within the program and its attendant apps. If you're not yet working in CC, then some of the functions introduced in the 2014 updates may just make you change your mind. Check it out on p26.

We've also selected some killer tips for creating pro-quality photo composites (p40) and followed that up with a complete tutorial on how to get to grips with compositing a photo illustration (p44). Then we take a look at how Saizen Media combined 3D models with photo textures to create an incredible key art illlustration (p50).

On p56 it's back to the CC innovations, as Paul Scott Canavan walks us through capturing and creating a brush using the Adobe Brush app, and then using your new brushes via your CC Library. Find it on p56. You'll find all this and much more inside - enjoy the issue!

COVER IMAGE

SOUFIANE IDRASSI
www.behance.net/soufiane_idrassi

Our beautiful cover image this issue is Singularity by Moroccan digital artist Soufiane Idrassi. He shares his top tips on p40 . Check out more of his incredible art on his Behance profile.





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ADVANCED PHOTOSHOP® PRO PANEL

MEET THE PROFESSIONALS SHARING THEIR PHOTOSHOP EXPERTISE AND TECHNIQUES IN THIS ISSUE



PAUL SCOTT CANAVAN
www.paulscottcanavan.com

Don't be afraid of colour! The mood of your work is defined by your use of colour and light and it isn't difficult to learn. Study artists you love (I'm particularly fond of Bierstadt) by examining their work in Photoshop; colour pick around the canvas and note how they apply colour, then try to recreate this in your own art.

■ **Discover more about Paul Scott Canavan's painting techniques as he explains how to make your own brushes in Adobe Brush on p56**



> "Don't be afraid of colour! The mood of your work is defined by your use of colour and light and it isn't difficult to learn"
>
> PAUL SCOTT CANAVAN / **WWW.PAULSCOTTCANAVAN.COM**



DAVIDE BIANCA
www.saizenmedia.com

Dragon Sword is a personal series of key art illustrations revolving around the adventures of a female dragon slayer. With epic story-telling comes epic scale, so being able to depict believable vast and deep environments as backdrops is crucial. Always work in planes and use contrast and colours to drive the eye where you want the viewer to focus.

■ **Discover how Saizen Media combine 3D and Photoshop to create key art graphics in their tutorial on p50**





IAN JAMIESON
www.hypedinteractive.com

Choose one effect for maximum outcome. The strongest Photoshop compositions have a clear focus and metaphor, rather than relying on a critical mass of filters and effects to achieve impact. While it's often tempting to add more, this often only dilutes the outcome. Try to appreciate that the strongest impact comes from a juxtaposition of the expected with the unexpected, and that a single effect, used well, can push boundaries of the viewer's imagination more than all special effects put together.

■ **Head to p44 to find out more about how Ian Jamieson creates his incredible photo illustrations in his in-depth tutorial**





TIM LUCAS
www.kitschstock.com & www.retrostockexpress.com

Producing convincing retro means being creative, but also observant. Each decade of the 20th Century (for example) has its very own different set of distinctive looks and styles for you to play around with. Making decisions such as what styles work best for the subject matter you have chosen before you begin, will help the end result to be far more convincing.

■ **Discover how to create retro-inspired images in Tim Lucas's tutorial on p72, and get an amazing creative pack from Retrostock (worth £1,200!) free on FileSilo**



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GET FUSION 7 FOR FREE

THE COMPOSITING TOOL BEHIND EDGE OF TOMORROW, GRAVITY, AVATAR, AND MORE, IS NOW FREE TO DOWNLOAD FOR EVERYONE

Having already been used in high-end Hollywood blockbusters and television shows for nearly 25 years, Fusion 7 has some impressive credits to its name. Helping create the imagery in everything from *Edge of Tomorrow, Gravity* and *Avatar* to *Breaking Bad* and *Downton Abbey*, the compositing tool for visual effects and motion graphics features a powerful node-based interface that allows users to create complex effects by connecting different types of effects, filters, or other processing together, similar to The Foundry's NUKE.

Blackmagic Design has now announced a revolutionary new change. However, instead of charging what could amount to thousands of dollars for its compositing software, the company has revealed that Fusion 7 for Windows is available completely free of charge for anyone who wants to use it, and can be downloaded directly from the Blackmagic Design website.

"Visual effects software has been expensive for way too long and it's time that this changed. Consumers are screaming for more exciting movies and television programmes, so we need to do everything we can to help our customers create stunning visual effects," said Grant Petty, Blackmagic Design CEO. "Now, with the free version of Fusion, everyone from individual artists to the biggest studios can create Hollywood-calibre visual effects and motion graphics."

The free Fusion 7 is a fully featured tool, and can be used for both personal and professional work, without any annual maintenance fees, subscriptions, a connection to the cloud, or per-node render license costs. With it, users will gain access to advanced 3D compositing, paint, retiming, stabilisation, vector pain, rotoscoping, and animated text tools, as well as multiple keyers, including Primatte, and even a 3D particle generator. Fusion 7 will also allow users to import and render 3D geometry and scenes from other applications as well as create their own 3D elements.

Getting things done as quickly as possible is also something that Blackmagic Design have taken very seriously with Fusion. With a GPU Accelerated Creative Workflow, the visual effects software tool is responsive, with a production-quality render engine that can let artists distribute their render across an unlimited number of networked computers.

You can download the free Fusion 7 today, from the Blackmagic Design website at **https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/uk/products/fusion.** Technical support is also available on the website through the Blackmagic Design community forums.



Take your pick: Users can choose between the free Fusion 7, or the $995 Fusion 7 Studio, which adds several high-end options to Fusion 7's range of tools

FUSION 7 STUDIO

Also announced was the $995 Fusion 7 Studio, which includes everything found in the free Fusion 7 software, as well as high-end features such as optical flow tools for advanced retiming, stabilisation and stereoscopic 3D production, support for third party OpenFX plug ins, and a studio-wide multi user workflow and collaboration tool for creative teams. Users can upgrade from Fusion 7 to Fusion 7 Studio at no additional cost.

> "Consumers are screaming for more exciting movies and television programmes, so we need to do everything we can to help our customers create stunning visual effects"
> **Grant Petty, Blackmagic Design CEO**



ABOUT BLACKMAGIC

Blackmagic Design creates video editing products, digital film cameras, video converters, routers, real time film scanners and more, for the feature film, post production and television broadcast industries – including the company's Emmy award winning DaVinci colour correction products. The company has offices in the USA, UK, Japan, Singapore and Australia.

IS THE SPROUT THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL ART?

HP'S NEW SPROUT WORKSTATION COMBINES A SCANNER, DEPTH SENSOR, CAMERA, AND PROJECTOR FOR A NEW WAY TO CREATE DIGITAL ART

Blending both the physical and digital worlds in a new type of workflow Hewlett-Packard has dubbed immersive computing, the company's new workstation – called Sprout – may change the future of how artists create CGI for good.

At $1900 for the all-in-one high-end machine, Sprout runs Windows 8.1 and features a 23-inch diagonal screen, with a built-in projector above it. Then, where a keyboard would normally be, is a 20-point capacitive touch-enabled surface called a Touch Map, which through the projector acts as an innovative second display. Users can easily drag and drop images or any other content between the two with their finger, and then manipulate it easily with the Touch Map – no keyboard or mouse required. Incorporated into the system is the arm above the screen called the HP Illuminator. This incorporates the DLP Projector as well as a high-resolution camera of up to 14.6 megapixels, and an Intel RealSense 3D camera to easily scan and capture both 2D and 3D objects. As if this wasn't enough, it can also act as an LED desk lamp.



Tech Specs: Sprout also comes with a fourth generation Intel Core i7-4790S processor, a high definition 1MP webcam, and dual USB 2.0 ports and USB 3.0 ports

With it, artists could easily scan words or drawings on a page, create 3D snapshots of real objects, or easily crop, resize and customise images with a finger or the Adonit Jot pro stylus – which can be attached magnetically to the upper right of the Sprout display – directly onto the Touch Map. With a 1TB Hybrid Drive of storage, up to 16GB of memory, and NVIDIA GeForce graphics, it's definitely a new workstation to be watched for. Everyone and anyone will want to snap-up one of these in no time.

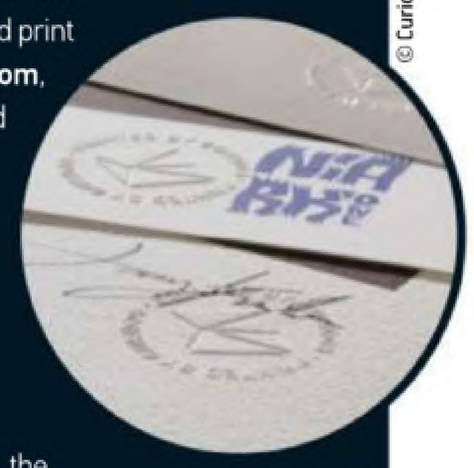


Learn More: The launch event for Sprout. Learn more and buy the workstation directly at **http://sprout.hp.com/**

CURIOOS RAISES $1.9 MILLION

DIGITAL ART MARKETPLACE **CURIOOS.COM** HAS RAISED A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF CAPITAL FROM PRIVATE NEW YORK INVESTORS

The art curation and print website, **Curioos.com**, has just announced that $1.9 million has been raised for the company from private investors.



© Curioos

Browsing: Prints and artists can be browsed by collection including movie themes, types of artwork and special-edition collections

Based in both Paris and more recently, New York, the Curioos team curate collections of some of the industry's most impressive digital artwork. They guarantee that all artwork will be printed using the best papers and technology available – prepared by hand and individually numbered, embossed, signed and sent with a certificate of authenticity. Through the website, users can follow artists around the world, bookmark their favourite pieces, buy the prints and either have them framed as a fine art print or sent as a canvas, aluminium, or acrylic glass print. Best of all, the cost of the prints starts at just $30, making them a very good price to decorate homes or give as a unique gift.

Born in 2011 as a Tumblr site, **Curioos.com** has now shifted to become a standalone startup, as well as expanding from Paris to New York. Any artists interested in selling their images as prints will need to either be invited by friends already on Curioos, be asked by the Curioos team themselves, who invite artists to the site on a regular basis, or request an invitation by submitting their email and website URL at **http://www.curioos.com/signup**.



Buying Prints: Buy a print from the Curioos website at Curioos.com. Prices start from just $30

© Curioos



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BUILDING 3D CHARACTERS

3D AND PHOTOSHOP GO HAND-IN-HAND. DIGITAL ARTIST ZHIVKO TERZIIVANOV DESCRIBES HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO WORK IN PHOTOSHOP DURING POST-PRODUCTION

With new rendering software being launched every year, the old boundaries that 3D artists faced when building images are no longer a problem. Yet, most professional artists we speak to still use Photoshop for some sort of post-production.

The relationship between 3D/CG and Photoshop has never been so important, and for 3D artist Zhivko Terziivanov, 3D is his passion. Starting out at art school, Terziivanov confesses that although he's not the best at drawing, his interest started when he studied traditional sculpture techniques.

WHAT GOT YOU KICK STARTED YOUR INTEREST IN THE CG/3D INDUSTRY?

I started my career in 2008 working as a graphic designer for an advertising agency. We had a lot of projects for print campaigns and there was always a need to visualise realistic objects – so it made me consider learning 3D.

WHY 3D IN PARTICULAR?

It gives me space for a lot of experimentation, which I love. I can work on a very realistic illustration and can then create a preview of something completely different – like a cartoon – in a matter of minutes. You can also easily make adjustments to every single aspect of the work, the light, view, angle and different textures.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU HAVE LEARNT DURING YOUR CAREER?

The most important thing that I've learnt is to never hurry and to not be afraid of failure. No matter what deadlines you are dealing with, you need time to perfect an image and it's not going to work on the first attempt. As I mentioned earlier, I was never really that good at drawing, but I wanted to work in a creative field, so I started looking for different ways of expressing myself and mixing different media. There was a lot of unsatisfying work, but I eventually found what I really like doing.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WORKING AS A FREELANCER?

When working as a freelancer the main challenge you face right away is uncertainty. It creeps in the moment you finish working on a project. Also you are alone all day, you get used to talking to yourself – or in my case to the cat (who by the way is a very good listener!) On the other hand, [in a long-term role] you have a busy office and steady payments. I guess it's up to the person really. I've always enjoyed working in a quiet environment and being alone. Even when I worked in an office, I used to take the images that I was working on and finish them at home, because there was no distraction there and I [could] focus on the details [easier on my own].

TALK US THROUGH YOUR *DEEP-SEA* IMAGE. HOW DID YOU CREATE IT?

I've always wanted to make this kind of deep-sea fish [image and] interpret it in my own way. Not as some sea monster living in the most hostile environment, but rather as a kind and goofy creature. There were two challenges whilst working on this project. The first one was creating the texture of the fish and the second one was the environment. I didn't want to use flakes for the body – I didn't want it to look like a regular fish – so I ended up using a normal map created from a stone texture, and this gave the fish a rougher appearance.

I painted the teeth in Photoshop because at that time, modelling them was going to take me too much time. The background was also done in Photoshop. I wanted to depict the deepest, darkest part of the ocean, and the little fish with only his lamp to cast light. I ended up using a lot of noise in order to simulate the microorganisms that are around him

> "I often paint in details in CC, because it reduces the amount of time I would normally spend modelling them. Also, if I'm not happy with the overall mood, I will play with the light"



Blocked View: For this image I wanted to emphasise the texture of the leather, so I used the High Pass filter. For the fries, I played with the Color Balance in order to achieve the right yellow hue

All images © Zhivko Terziivanov

Emotional Baggage: Working with Color Balance was essential for this image, because I was not sure what mood I should use [for the best effect]

Button Bot: The reflections were important in this image so I wanted to focus on them. I spent more time with the specular and reflection passes I'd rendered in 3D and then added blending modes

The Log: I wanted to make this image as realistic as possible. I also used a lot of gradients for the background in order to match the light sources

and to achieve [the look of] something flickering around the lamp [in front of him].

DO YOU OFTEN USE PHOTOSHOP FOR POST-PRODUCTION?

When I started, I always wondered how [other] artists managed to render magnificent illustrations with such vivid colour and details. My renders were awful! I spent hours trying to achieve good results, but the images always ended up with not enough light and with dull, flat textures. The minute I started playing with the adjustment layers and blending modes in Photoshop, I realised that there was no way I could ever produce good images without using it. Now I use Photoshop for every render I make.

WHAT MADE YOU CREATE THE INSIDE-OUT IMAGES OF DRILLS/MECHANICAL OBJECTS?

The ideas for [these] images came from the fact that I've always had difficulty fixing stuff around the house. One day, whilst I was trying to fix a hole in the wall, I realised that I had never used a drill before, so I tried to picture what was inside it, how it functions and to depict it in another way. It was the same with the laptop illustration.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL SEPARATES YOUR ARTWORK FROM OTHERS?

It will sound surprising, but my personality. Even through my work, I believe that the most important part is to evolve as a human being, and when I develop my personality it will reflect in my work too. It's a win-win situation. My work is not about my visual talent, it is more about adding tons of tiny details. Most importantly it's about good communication with your client and the people around you. Having a helpful attitude, solving problems, staying organised and not overloading yourself – I try to do all of these things.

WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF CREATING A 3D IMAGE?

The most challenging part is the lighting. When I first started, I used to spend a lot of time trying to make the perfect technical image, but after I rendered the model and saw that this was not possible, I started playing more with the lighting and my renders improved greatly.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH PHOTOSHOP AND YOUR WORKFLOW?

I use [Photoshop] mainly for compositing and for colour correction. After I'm happy with the model, its textures and lighting, then I send it to Photoshop. I often paint in details in CC, because it reduces the amount of time I would normally spend modelling them. Also, if I'm not happy with the overall mood of the illustration, I will play with the light in Photoshop.



Inner Radio: I've always liked medical illustrations, so I wanted to make something similar. For this image, I played with the Color Balance tool and added in selective adjustment layers to achieve the same look



I Like Trains: I painted the whole background in Photoshop for this image, which I later composed with the rendered train and its rails

> "I also love to play with blending modes and sometimes I end up with very unexpected results, which adds more to the illustration"

Deep Sea: In order for the texture of the fish to stand out, I used a lot of noise in this image. I also applied a High Pass filter and painted the teeth in Photoshop

90's Kid: The textures for this image were created only using simple materials. After rendering the image, I added the cloud background using Photoshop.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT USING PHOTOSHOP?

My favourite thing about using Photoshop is the [opportunity] to experiment with the colours. As the adjustment layers are non-destructive, you can always come back and edit them [later]. I also love to play with blending modes and sometimes I end up with very unexpected results, which adds more to the illustration.

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU NEED TO BECOME A GOOD 3D ARTIST?

Since you are recreating real-life objects, I think the main skill is to be observant. Observe your surroundings, how the light affects objects and materials, and their texture, and have this in mind when you create your own piece. Another important aspect is to be very passionate about what you do – it will help you move forward.

HOW DO YOU USUALLY RENDER YOUR CHARACTERS AND CREATE REALISTIC TEXTURES WHEN WORKING ON A PIECE?

Most of the time I don't know what the character details will look like. Only after it develops do I start thinking about his/her accessories and what kind of textures I would like to use. For realistic textures I often use photos of different materials, which I combine in Photoshop and then apply to the character. [Once I am] happy with them, I render the image and [then] return to Photoshop [to make] additional colour corrections.

> "I think 3D printing has a lot of potential [for the future]. Once it is made accessible to a wider audience and people start experimenting with it, I think that there will be a lot of interesting inventions [created]"

DO YOU WORK OUTSIDE OF 3D VERY OFTEN OR IS THIS YOUR PRIMARY FOCUS?

I try to stay focused mainly on 3D because there are a lot of things [that I can] learn. I also do logo design illustration, but it's not my main focus.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR OTHER 3D ARTISTS WHO ARE TRYING TO GET THEIR FOOT IN THE DOOR?

[Try] to learn as much as you can. I found that the best way of learning is through [working on] personal projects. Then later, you can apply this knowledge to commercial work.

WHAT CG/3D DISCIPLINES DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE NEXT BIG THING?

I think 3D printing has a lot of potential [for the future]. Once it is [made] accessible to a wider audience and people start to experiment with it, I think that there will be a lot of interesting inventions [created] that could change our everyday life. It will also be great for 3D artists because they will be able to see their creations as real life objects and exhibit them. I'm certainly looking forward to this [for my own work].

PORTFOLIO TIPS

TERZIIVANOV GIVES HIS ADVICE ON HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN PORTFOLIO

■ LOOK AROUND YOU

Observe everything that surrounds you. It's like those point-and-click games, you never know where the solution to a problem is hidden until you look for it. Looking around is very useful especially if you are in a creative block. It has helped me a lot when I [have been] struggling to think of a creative solution for a problem.

■ BE DIFFERENT

Never settle with the first idea that comes to mind, because everyone has [usually] done it already. Even though it may sound good at first, leave it for a while and come back to it later to see if it is as good as the first time you thought of it.

■ TRY TO EXPERIMENT

Try to recreate everything that inspires you, that way you will be able to find your own style. I tried many different styles and media before I found what really suited me, and [now] I'm happy with the work I do.



Infected Laptop: In this image I wanted to create the right hues and reflections and at the same time, keep the contrast between the different sections

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And now... for something completely different!

Calling all retro geeks and vintage image obsessives - why not take a walk on our wild side?

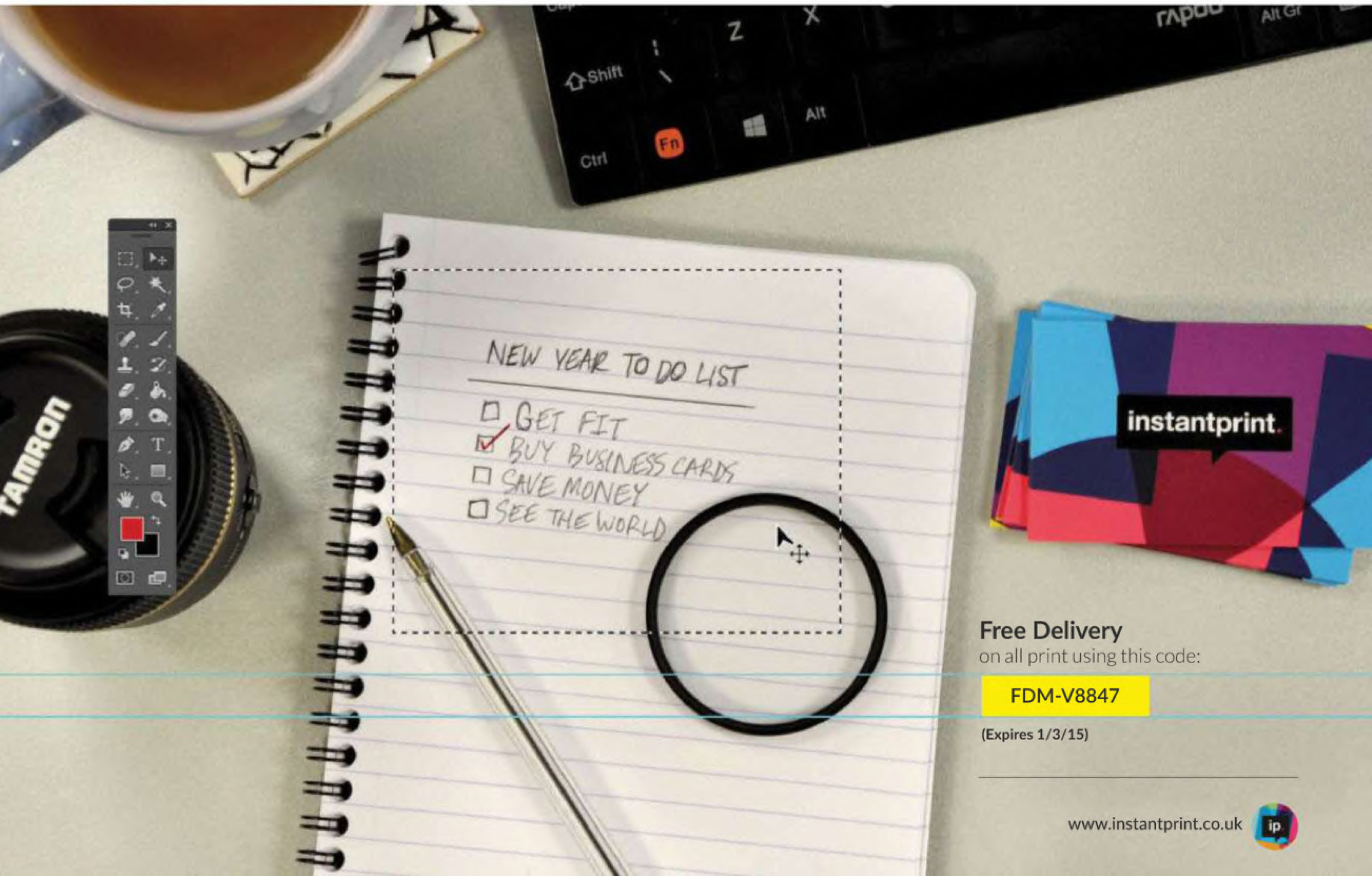


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DIGITAL PAINTING FOR ARCH-VIS

CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF ARQUI9 VISUALISATION, PEDRO FERNANDES, REVEALS HOW HE BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN RENDER AND DIGITAL PAINTING

ABOUT THE ARTIST
PEDRO FERNANDES
arqui9.com



Pedro studied and worked as an architect both in Australia and Portugal, before completing the permanent move into the visualisation field in London. At present, he is the creative director of his own digital visualisation firm, Arqui9 Visualisation.

NAME OF PROJECT
EVERY MOUNTAIN


Initial clay model

Fascinated by colour and composition, creative director Pedro Fernandes worked for many London studios including Squint Opera, Vyonyx, Cityscape 3D and Crystal CG, before starting-up his own digital visualisation firm with Arqui9.

Along with his duties as creative director, Fernandes also regularly lectures at events, as well as teaching on platforms such as the Arqui9 Visualisation Youtube channel and Digital Tutors. In fact, it was from one of these teaching opportunities that his recent eye-level visualisation piece was born. "This image was created as part of a creative development series for Digital Tutors," Fernandes explains. "The brief was simple: create a piece with styles and techniques which would inspire others and also yourself."

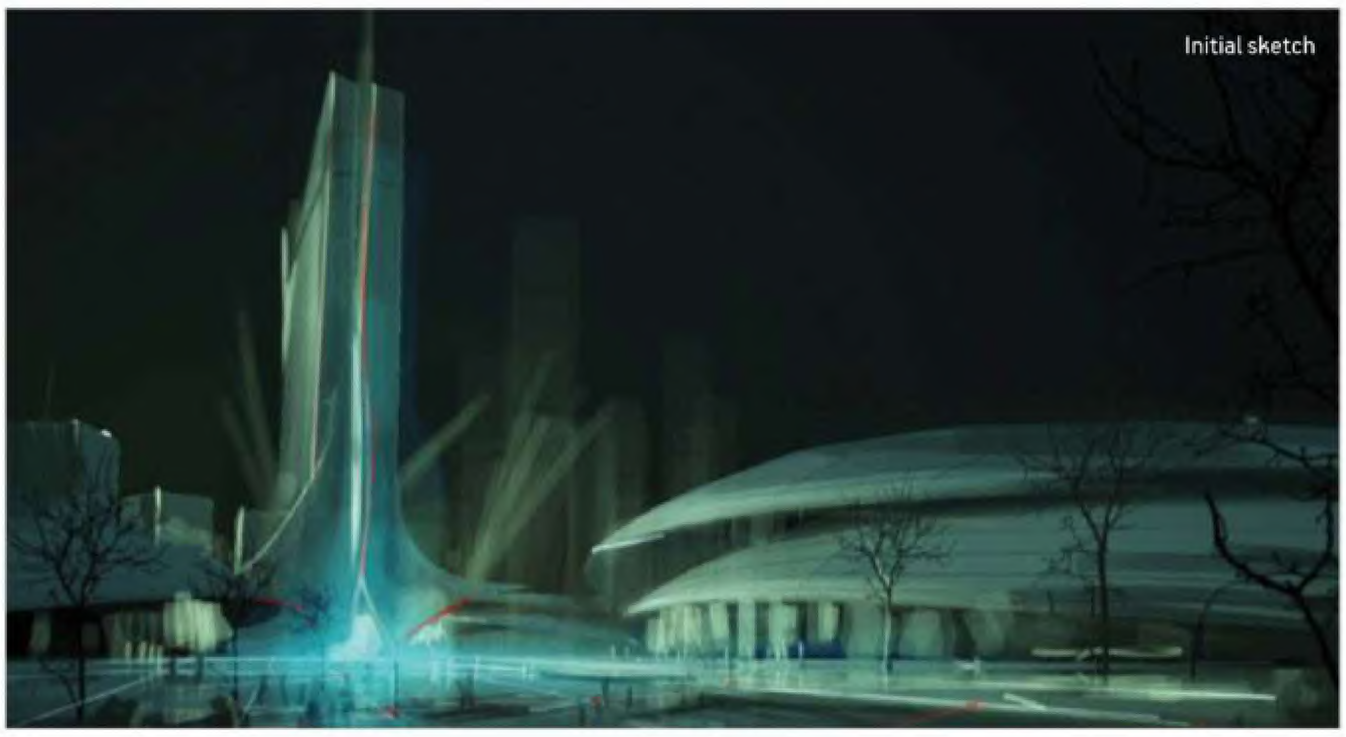
With such an open brief to work with, Fernandes combined a variety of images using various blend modes and painting on Overlay layers with textures, to create a sense of painterly detail on top of his initial 3D render. "This for me is the hardest part," he continues, "overcoming the harshness of a render and integrating it with a human feeling, guiding our eyes to central focus points."

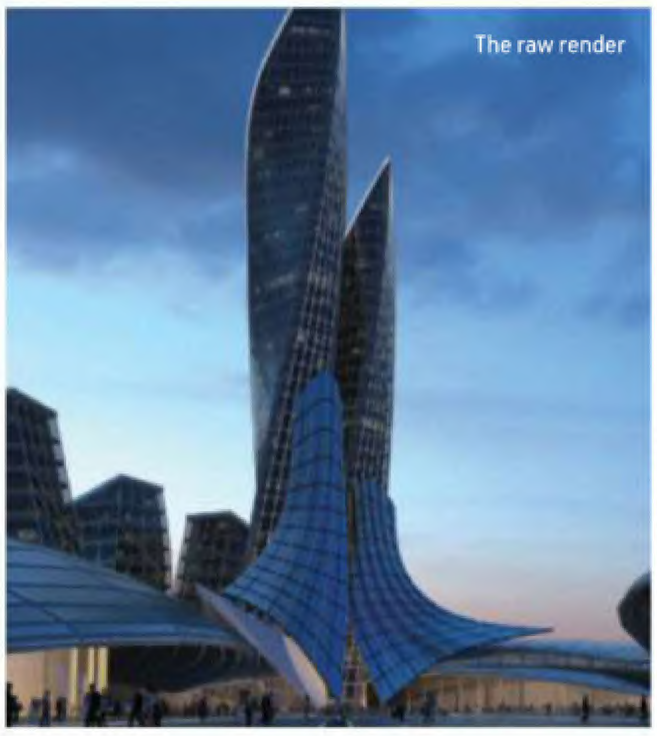
CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT STARTING YOUR OWN DIGITAL VISUALISATION FIRM?
The transition from freelancer to studio was one that occurred naturally. I wanted to have a more direct input and approach with the client and the person in charge, directly understanding what ideas, knowledge and direction they wanted to go in. It's been quite a quick and joyful ride. [It's a] lot of work, with many new and different challenges that occur every day and require a quick response, but there is nothing more rewarding than a client coming back to you and saying, "job well done", that's what makes it [worthwhile] in the end.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST START USING PHOTOSHOP TO HELP CREATE YOUR IMAGES, AND WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO USE IT TODAY?
I actually started using Photoshop quite some time ago. [It was about] 15 years [ago that] I made my first contact. Strangely enough, I was making banners for friends' websites and it landed me a couple of foreign clients. This helped me buy my first DJ mixing set and it paid next to nothing, but it did give me a strong sense of visual design when I first started university to study architecture.

I would say that the only tool that has stuck with me since the start is Photoshop. I can't put into words just how amazing and simple a tool it is.

We work in architectural visualisation and one of our studio's unique approaches is the 'use and abuse' of 2D to complement 3D renders. Our style has been described as painterly and I really appreciate that it's been considered as such. Painting in comparison to the harsh reality of a pure 3D render is so much more humanistic, and binds people's empathy and facility to engage. We can only thank Photoshop for enabling us to explore the tools in such a way.


Initial sketch


The raw render

All images © PedroFernandes

I've included 2D planes within 3D for background people, and added the foreground characters in postproduction. Given that we have a night shot, I've added a blur around the people, especially where it's fast moving. Use the Lasso tool and add a Feather of 10 pixels. This will create a soft selection, where we can add a Radial Blur to give a natural feel.

Glazing uses similar techniques to texture overlaying. Simple texture overlaying of various images, playing with Screen or Dodge modes, and then masking out areas to create different interiors, creates a realistic effect. To bring out the shine and gloss, I apply another Overlay layer and paint it white with a soft brush to bring out the contrast.

[I frequently use] textures of light flares. Set to Screen, I paint a bokeh effect around them, especially in night scenes. The bokeh can be achieved with a brush, and softness and scattering added to the properties on a Screen blend mode layer.

Final beauty pass

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE YOUR FAVORITE PHOTOSHOP TOOLS?

I [think that] the layer blending modes [are my favourite]. Using images and colours applied over various blending modes [creates] the most fantastic effects. This, along with the power of brushes and their various settings, can really deliver some amazing results.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CREATE YOUR WORK USING VARIOUS BLEND MODES AND PAINTING ON OVERLAY LAYERS?

[Most] of the lighting and effects we use in our images derives from the use of various layer modes. For instance, the Overlay mode is generally used to contrast and bring out highlights, it works really well with windows and adding activity to interiors. Soft Light is also another favourite – it's almost a mix between contrast and painting. It's nice to add some warm tones in lighter areas and also to darken certain tones or vignettes.

Another great way of experimenting with these is to simply import images into your files and use the various layer blend functions, as well as brushing out with your choice of brush.

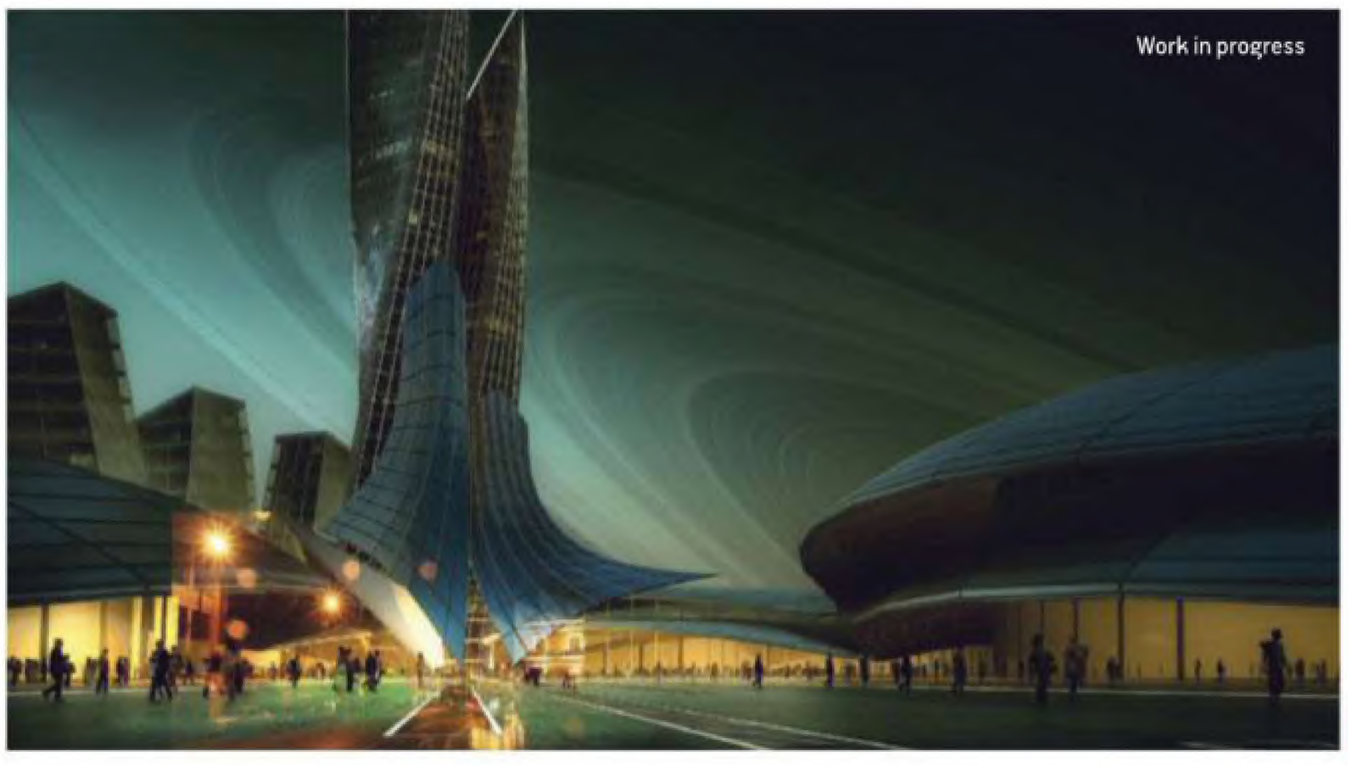
IF YOU COULD GIVE A NEW ARTIST YOUR TIPS TO OVERCOME THE HARSHNESS OF A RENDER, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

Renders are generally perfect but very harsh. Nature in comparison is imperfect. There are a million subtle lighting effects and textures that surround us – something that no render engine has the capacity to capture without months of hard work. When we take on a render, we envision it as a raw material on which we will build a world.

[We start with] a raw product or guide, and then start to add the grass, stones, light flares, glows and textures of the humans who inhabit the spaces and blend these with the base. Again, this is done using masks and blending modes with the render to make the image come alive.

We need to balance and compose the image as well – this is visual design after all. Generally, lighter or warmer areas will [draw in the eye], whilst the colder ones will balance them out. Have a glance through various types of paintings and see how artists have used colour and values (bright or dark) to guide your eyes.

We tend to find elements that balance each other out – someone with a red [jumper] for example – may equal out a red wall on the opposite side of the image. It's these types of parallels, and even triangulating elements, that can help an image achieve a certain humanity [and realism] in comparison to a raw render [which is really effective in many different images].



Work in progress

ZUUS DESIGN

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TWO LONG-TERM FRIENDS WITH A PASSION FOR ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN COME TOGETHER TO FORM A STUDIO? ZUUS DESIGN IS THE HOME STUDIO WITH BIG ASPIRATIONS

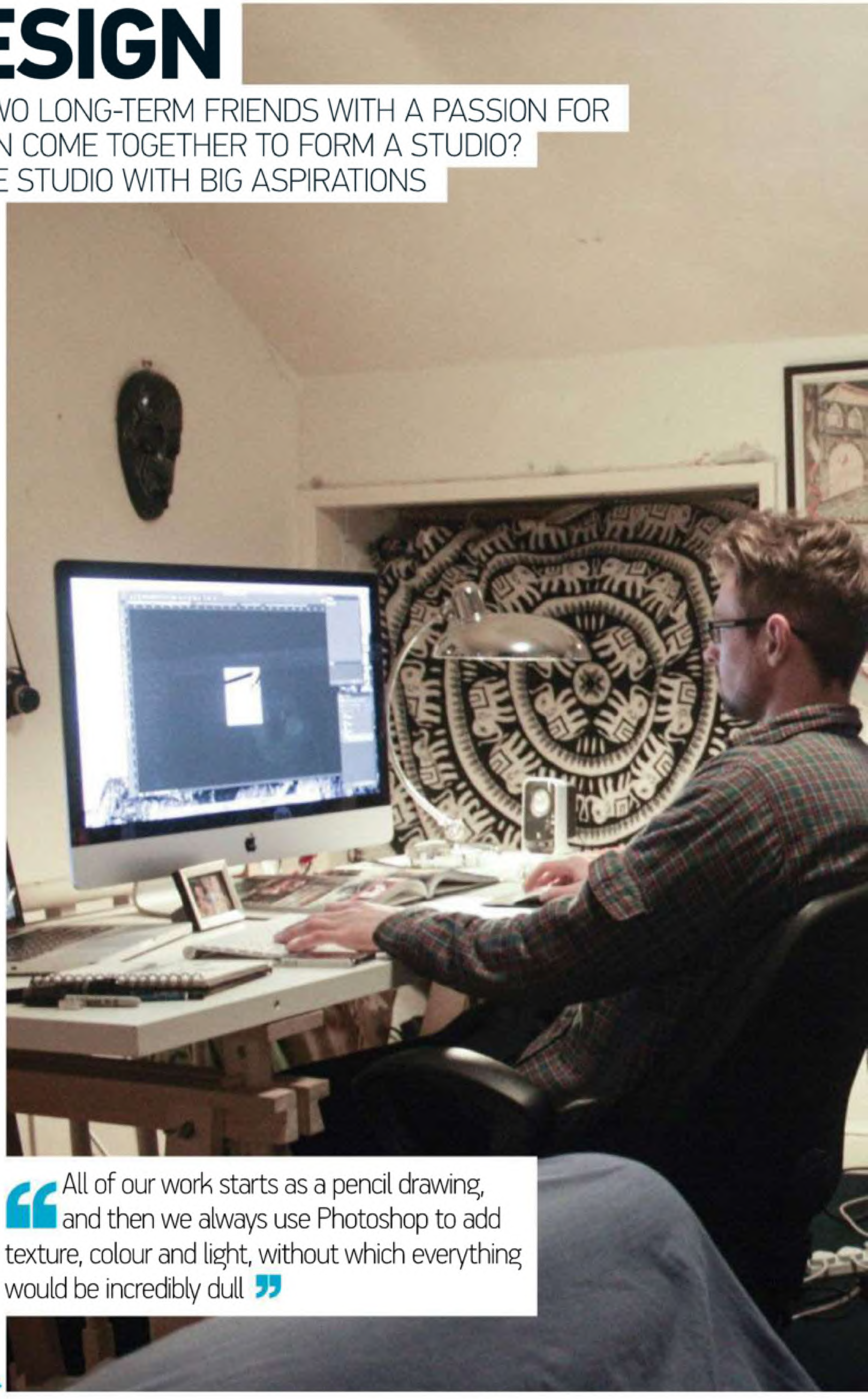
Zuus Design is a relatively new studio, bringing together the talents of two childhood friends who have a passion for art and design. Together, lead designer, Tom Wells and lead illustrator, Josh Deamer-Macaulay, have built up a strong client base by offering their bespoke style to customers.

Their relationship goes way back and they followed different paths before building their studio, as Wells explains: "We have known each other since school, but went to different universities when we were 19. Josh went to Birmingham to study illustration and I went to Lancaster to study film and advertising. After graduating from Lancaster, I began working for the Student's Union as an in-house designer, and eventually started working as a freelance graphic designer in our hometown of York. When Josh graduated, he moved to Hong Kong for a while, before also moving back to York to work in freelance illustration. Earlier in 2014, we eventually decided to pool our skills and create Zuus Design, with the intention of offering a bespoke design and illustration service for our clients."

At the moment, the duo work from their home studio – a converted loft in a Victorian building on the outskirts of York. "We have a good amount of hardware to work with, the view is pretty and it's great to be in the same creative space to bounce ideas off each other," says Wells. "This said, we are looking to move into a larger studio in the city, but we [do] enjoy working in the space we have."

Despite not having been around as a brand all that long, they still feel that they can offer something that their peers don't. Deamer-Macaulay explains: "As we are quite new, we are still finding our feet and trying to fine-tune our individual style. [However,] we think we are relatively unique in our area, in terms of combining corporate branding design styles with more quirky and unconventional illustration. We both have a background in designing for underground music labels and events, and this has lead to a style that is slightly off the wall. We have tried to embrace this, while also using more traditional design and branding techniques to create a style that could appeal to a number of audiences at once."

So, are they able to add their own style and input into their clients' briefs? "Yes and no," answers Deamer-Macaulay. "We both have styles that we enjoy working with and generally, we will try to incorporate this into as many briefs as possible. As an illustrator, I have always known the importance of



> "All of our work starts as a pencil drawing, and then we always use Photoshop to add texture, colour and light, without which everything would be incredibly dull"

ABOUT THE STUDIO

ZUUS DESIGN

zuusdesign.com
@zuusdesign

Formed in 2014, Zuus is a multi-disciplined design and illustration collective based in York, creating contemporary print, illustration and web design. Through inspired thinking and technical experience, they enable clients to strengthen their brand and connect to their audience



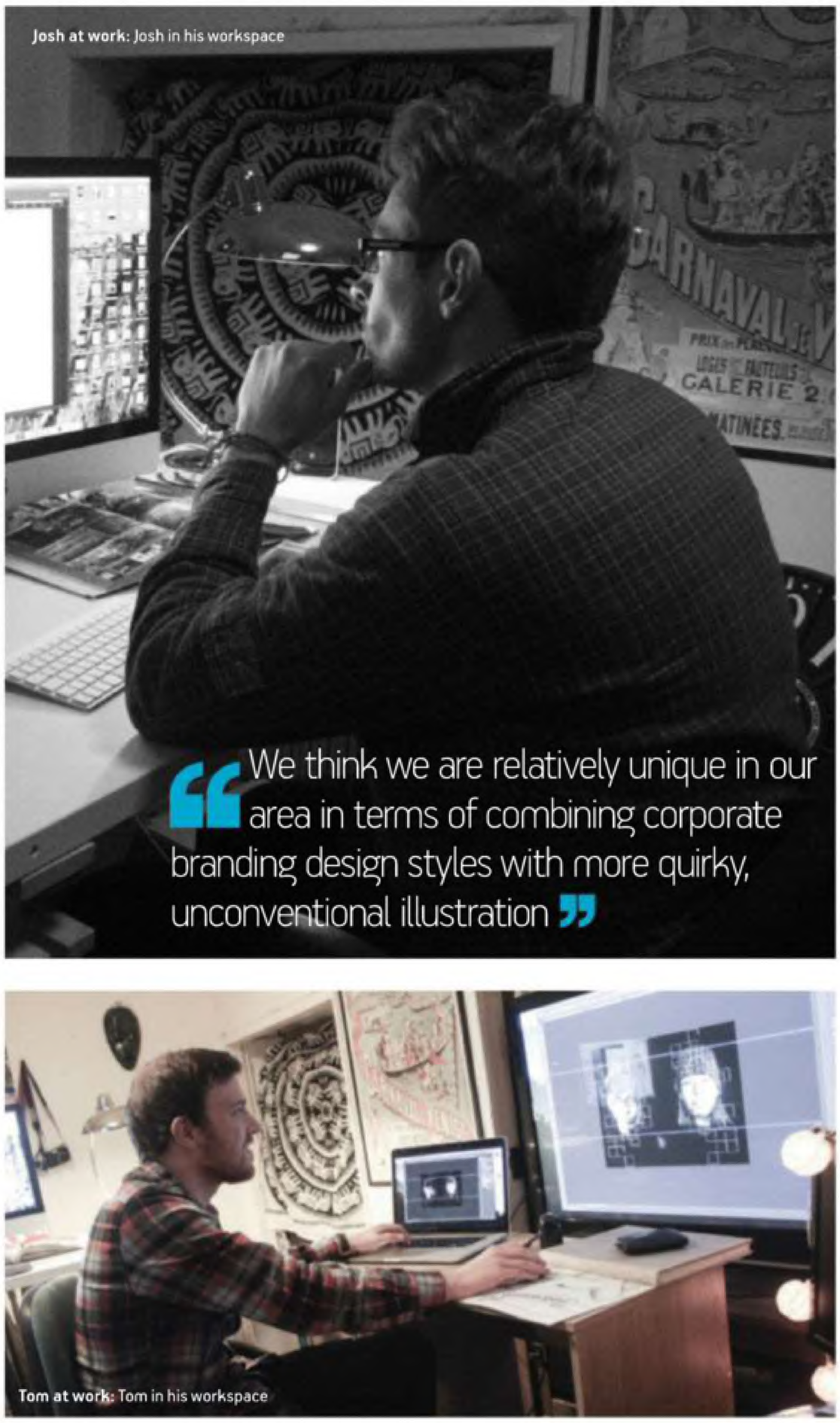
Tom Wells
Lead Designer



Josh Deamer-Macaulay
Lead Illustrator

Working in the studio: Both of us working in the home studio

All images© The Team 2014



Josh at work: Josh in his workspace

> "We think we are relatively unique in our area in terms of combining corporate branding design styles with more quirky, unconventional illustration"

Tom at work: Tom in his workspace



Say Nada: Artwork created for Say Nada, an event in Birmingham

having a distinctive individual style, however, I have come to realise that sometimes a brief must incorporate a style [that's] different to what we are used to. That said, the nicest jobs are always the ones that have been given to you specifically because of your individual style."

The type of projects that Zuus Design has worked on varies, which showcases the duo's versatility. A recent standout for Wells was being asked to create DVD artwork and an accompanying booklet for a documentary produced about the protests in Hong Kong. "This interested me because of my background in film, and we liked the challenge of incorporating the style of the film into the design work. We had some really interesting photography to work with from the film itself, which always helps."

They are also not afraid to push their own limits. Being from design and illustration backgrounds, they admit to a "rather limited experience of coding". When faced with a web-based commission, the team met the challenge head on, as Wells explains: "We were asked to create a website for a friend's business and saw this as a great opportunity to start taking web more seriously. The design aspect of the job went a lot more smoothly than we thought. We used Photoshop to create a layout and perfect every individual detail. After we were both happy with the aesthetic and design of the website, we rose to the challenge of coding it. We recruited somebody who we had worked with before, who has a background in web development, and got him to give us a crash course in how to fine-tune our coding skills. After a number of late nights and failed attempts, we managed to get to the point where we could turn our Photoshop design into a fully functioning website. We now are comfortable designing for the web and look to go further into this area in the future."

The home studio, while small, has everything that the team need for their current output. They predominantly work on the Adobe Creative Suite – Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign – as well as Lightroom for their photo library and Dreamweaver for web projects. "Generally we switch between the software as each has its own primary functions. Illustrator is normally a starting point, with InDesign and Photoshop [being] used to put a finish on things for print or digital [work] respectively." Photoshop is a key tool for the type of work that Zuus Design is



PEYOTE

JOSH SHOWS US HOW HE ILLUSTRATED THE EYE OF A LIZARD FOR THIS SHORT GRAPHIC NOVEL



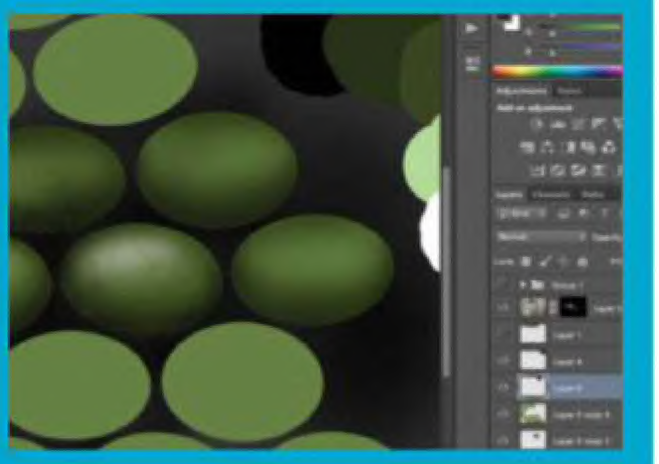
01 | INITIAL SKETCHING

The first part of the process was to roughly sketch out the elements of the comic in order to make sure it worked as a story. These sketches will form the base template for the more detailed illustration to follow.



02 | FINAL PENCIL DRAWING

This pencil drawing serves as the skeleton for the digital illustration. We scanned this into the computer and used it as a base to work from in Photoshop.



03 | DIGITAL PAINTING

We used real images of lizards to gain inspiration for the digital painting of the image. A Wacom tablet was used in conjunction with Photoshop to paint on colours, textures, shadows and light onto the lizard's face.



04 | MANIPULATION

We used the Warp tool to manipulate previously finished elements of the comic in order to create an accurate reflection of the landscape inside the lizard's eye.



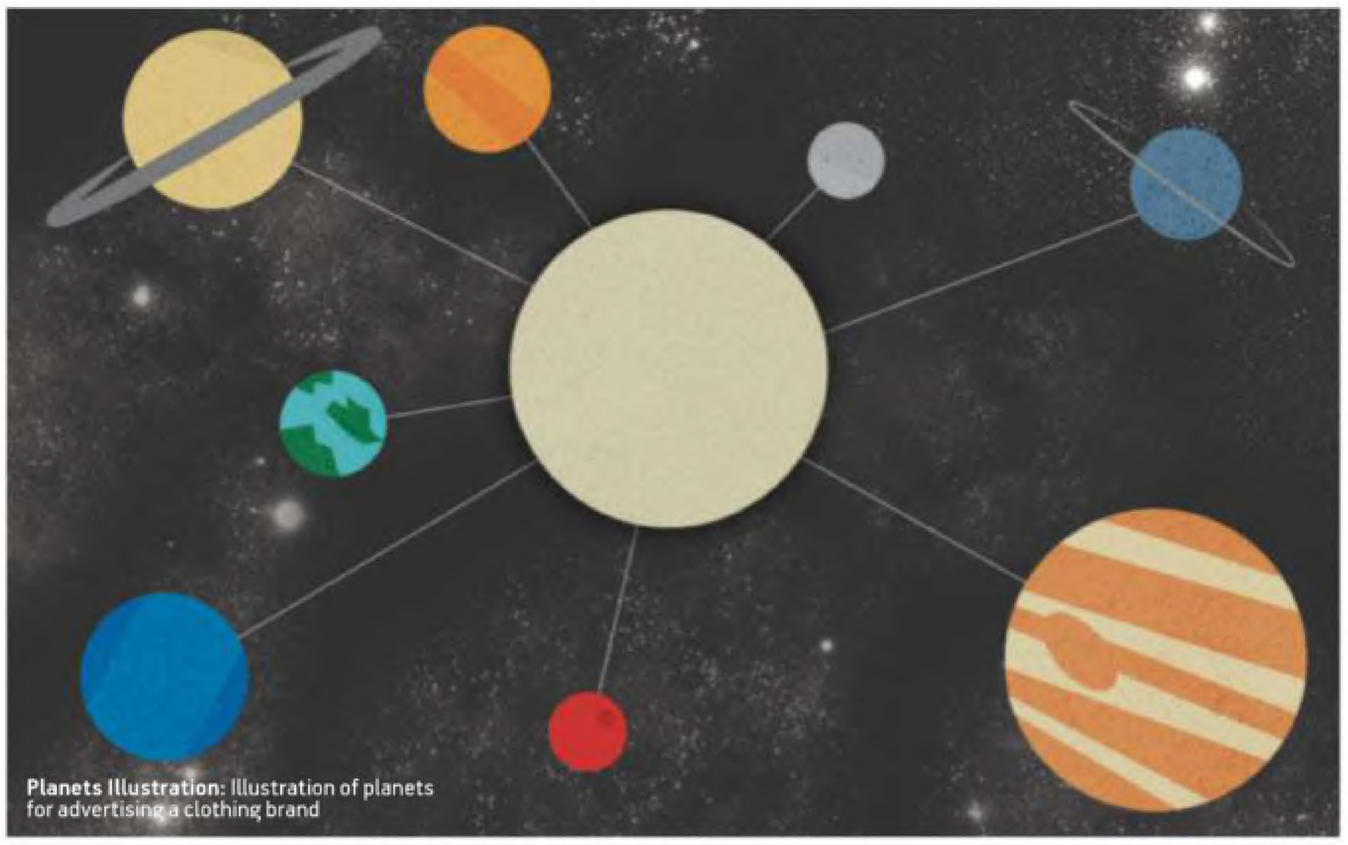
05 | END PRODUCT

The final product was printed on high-quality gloss paper to bring out the deep colours of the image and to give it the sense of depth created by the digital painting process.

producing, especially when converting hand-drawn work into digital designs. "All of our work starts as a pencil drawing, and then we always use Photoshop to add texture, colour and light, without which everything would be incredibly dull!" says Wells. He describes Photoshop as, "a vital tool at numerous stages of the design process from conception to completion. From an illustration point of view, we use Photoshop to help create almost all of our ideas, in conjunction with other Adobe products. Josh is a great fan of digital painting, something which can be seen in [a lot] of his work. Photoshop allows for a finish that can't be achieved with any traditional illustration method, and its features have certainly had an affect on our aesthetic style."

As well as digital painting and working up pencil sketches, it is also used to create preliminary website layouts to show to clients, as well as to create entirely bespoke posters and digital graphics for advertising purposes. "Out of everything we use, Photoshop is probably the thing we head back to the most during any given project", says Wells. "It is incredibly versatile and [is used by] our friends [who work] in photography, fashion and animation. It is impressive just how far it can go, and how differently it can work for certain industries."

With the right tools to in place to produce high-quality work, the other essential factor in the studio's success is how well Wells and Deamer-Macaulay work together and understand each other's style and abilities in a way that only long-term friends really can. "We have a good knowledge of each other's skills and limits," says Wells. "In most of the jobs we do, we try to utilise both illustration and design in such a way so that we can incorporate both of our individual styles. As one of us is from an illustration background and one from a design background, we can offer different perspectives on things, and execute ideas that we wouldn't be able to individually. We are good at working to deadlines and [dividing] tasks to ensure that [every part of each] job is completed by the person with the appropriate skills. Most importantly, however, we can be constructively critical of each other's work, which I think is necessary in any design team."



Planets Illustration: Illustration of planets for advertising a clothing brand

> "As one of us is from an illustration background and one from a design background, we can offer different perspectives on things, and execute ideas that we wouldn't be able to individually"

Their home setup and close-knit teamwork is certainly working magic for now, but looking forward, the aim is to move into a larger studio in York or Leeds, and expand their client portfolio. "We have generally been working for smaller, local businesses, but have begun to attract more high-profile clients, and so to achieve a consistent mix of these two 'types' of client would be brilliant," says Deamer-Macaulay. "Also, we hope to [delve] further into the web design world. So far we have focused more on print design and illustration, and less on web and digital, but have begun to work on a number of web projects recently. We are both experienced in what we do but are a young studio with high aspirations, so hopefully things will continue building at a good rate over the coming months and years." With an already high success rate, a great work ethic and a perfect blend of skills, it seems that the only way is up for Zuus design.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF TOM WELLS

LEAD DESIGNER TOM TALKS US THROUGH HIS TYPICAL DAY



09:00 | **DIVIDE AND CONQUER**
We get into work and mull over a pile of emails with a nice big mug of coffee on hand. We discuss the day's work and divide the tasks between the two of us.



11:00 | **IDEA GENERATION**
If we have a new brief to start working on, we will spend the morning sketching out loads of different ideas, some great and some not so great! Eventually we sort through everything to find the idea that we want to go forward with.



13:00 | **LUNCHTIME**
Josh, our illustrator, just happens to also be an aspiring whizz in the kitchen, and always knocks us up something spectacular for our lunch. Just one of the benefits of having a home studio!



The Bass Race: Artwork created for The Bass Race, an independent underground music night



Digital Illustration: An illustration created by Josh, our illustrator

TOP 5 PRODUCTION TIPS

Tom explains his top tips for an effective workflow

■ AUTOMATE!
Use the Actions tool in Photoshop to record and automate any processes that you need to use multiple times. This has saved me hours of repetitive editing.

■ BE SUBTLE
Nobody likes anything to look too over the top. For me, good design is about simplicity and clever detail.

■ DON'T OVER COMPLICATE THINGS
Sometimes you can spend a lot of time adding more detail, only to realise at the end that it looked better earlier in the process. Now and again something incredibly simple can actually work better than something complex.

■ TAKE A BREAK
I've spent hours in the past staring at my screen hoping for an idea to [pop into] my head when I can't get a job right. Sometimes it's best to leave something [for a while] and look at it with fresh eyes.

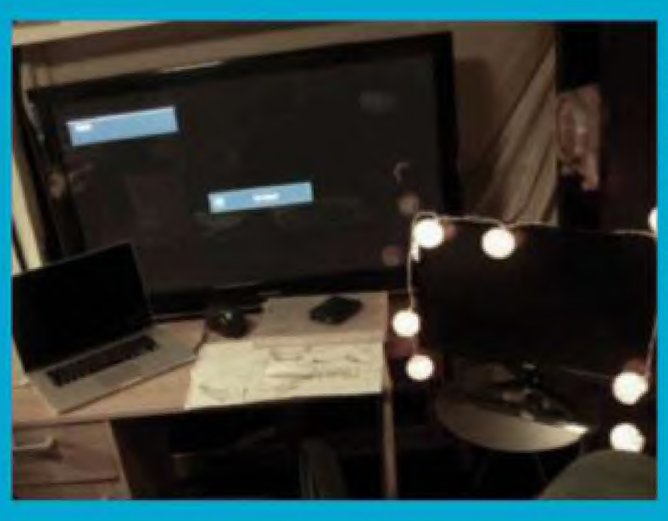
■ ACCEPT CRITIQUE
I used to find bad feedback disheartening and it [could] sometimes put me off the job. It is important to learn that criticism is a part of the job and allow it to help you improve your work.



14:00 | CALL THE CLIENT
We always try to keep in touch with current clients as regularly as possible, both for our benefit and theirs. If a constant dialogue is kept up, then there is less room for unnecessary errors.



16:30 | THE PRINT RUSH
It always seems around this time that we realise we need to get files off to the printers before 5pm, and so in late afternoon we can often be seen converting to CMYK and exporting PDFs like maniacs!



19:00 | END OF PLAY
While we say 7pm, anybody who has worked to a deadline knows that 'home time' can be a rather inconsistent matter. When the work is done we stick the Xbox on and try and switch off for the night.

All images: © Zuus Designs

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45 WAYS TO WORK SMARTER IN PHOTOSHOP CC

TIPS, TRICKS AND HACKS TO HELP YOU IMPROVE YOUR WORKFLOW, BE MORE EFFICIENT AND DISCOVER THE BEST TOOLS FOR THE JOB AT HAND, WITH ADVICE FROM PROS IN THE INDUSTRY

01. IMPROVE YOUR CC WORKFLOW

Adobe Community Professional and illustrator Gavin Campbell (**www.thewhitehawk.co.uk**) shares the three distinct features in CC that he thinks "greatly enhance workflows for designers, illustrator and photographers".





Focus Area selection tool : "This tool figures out what is in focus based on the amount of detail present in the image. You can then make selections from the focus area. This is a great time-saving alternative to the Pen tool for images where the main subject is in focus and the background is not



Upsampling tool: The most useful feature for print designers or anyone who often works with lower-res images that need to be scaled up, is the Intelligent Upsampling tool. You can now resize images directly within Photoshop while maintaining the required detail, without resorting to third-party plug-ins



Non-destructive elements: Having the abillity to apply filters and effects in a non-destructive way is a huge bonus to everyone using CC. This is because it allows you to play with the effects to enhance your image without actually having to commit to them or duplicate the layer



02. CREATE QUICK TEXTURES WITH BRUSHES





Freelance illustrator Natalie Smillie (**www.nataliesmillie.com**) saves time in her workflow when creating her quirky and distinctive designs by making use of brushes: "I like to use lots of texture and to achieve this I use brushes. Some people prefer using a texture image and layer [blending] modes, and while I do that sometimes, [most] of the time I've directly painted any textures [that] I want. This is to give me greater control over where the colours and textures are painted, and makes my work a lot more efficient. [This means that] I don't have to spend time masking out areas where I don't want texture.

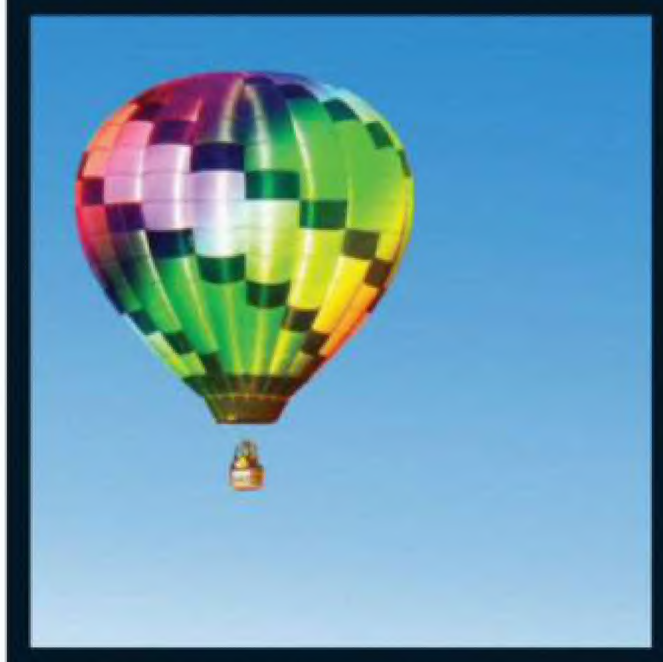
My favourite brushes are Kyle T Webster's (**www.kyletwebster.com/for-sale/**). He makes absolutely wonderful brushes that simulate traditional media, and this is fantastic for a digital artist who loves to work with a traditional look! The Gouache brushes are my favourites; they give a marvellous, rough and gritty texture while still retaining a lot of controllability on the screen. I use a Wacom Bamboo tablet, and take full advantage of the pressure sensitivity with these brushes – the softer and more delicate I am, the softer the mark I make. I can vary the strength of the mark I make and also blend colours easily into one another. I also vary the opacity of the brush and build colour in gradually."

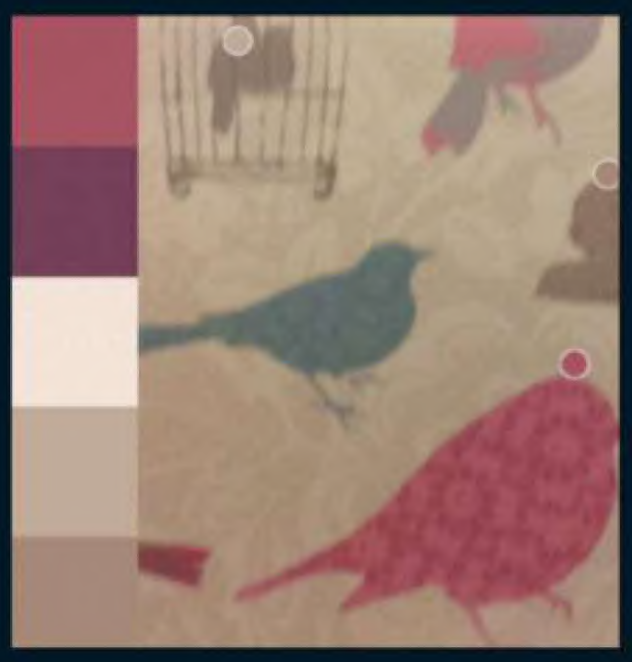
03. MASTER THE FIELD BLUR

David Cousens (**www.CoolSurface.com**) tells us why you should get to know the new CC Blur Gallery: "My favourite timesaving additions to Photoshop CC are in the revamped Blur Gallery. In older versions, adding blurs to your illustrations and photos was a bit of a song and dance where you'd have to apply a Gaussian Blur to a duplicated layer and then use a layer mask, an airbrush and the Gradient Fill tool to control the blurring effect revealing the original image underneath.

When Photoshop CC introduced the Field Blur, life became so much simpler. Click Filter>Blur>Field Blur and you will start with a 'pin' that acts as a focus point for the blur. You can click and drag this pin to any point in your image that you want blurred. So far it just looks a standard blur, but click anywhere else and you will create another pin; if you change the amount of the blurring (by dragging the circle slider around the pin) it will fade from one pin to the next. You can add as many pins as you want, each with its own blur value, and you can view the changes in real time, which gives you a huge amount of control over which aspects of your image are blurred so you can make sure your audience is focussing exactly where you want them to."

04. FOUR APPS TO ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY





ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD

Price: Free

Compatibility: iOS 8.1 or later

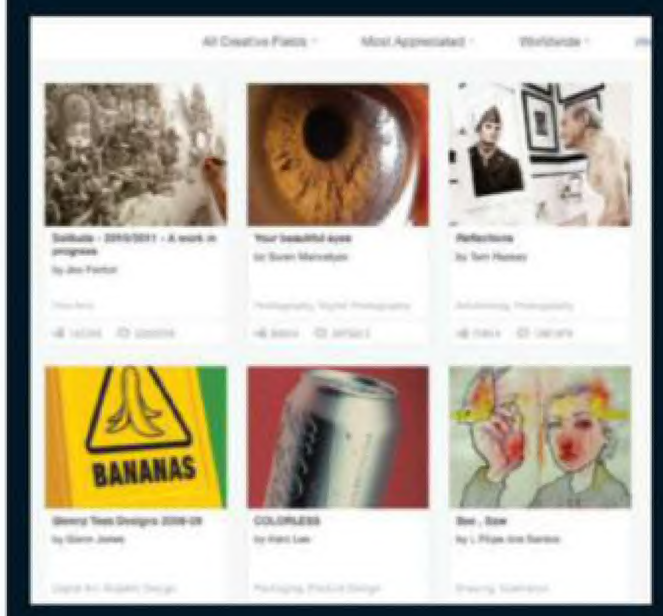
If you use Creative Cloud to store and manage your artwork, then this app is included as part of your membership. Use it to browse and preview PSDs and other design files from your iPhone or iPad, which is handy if you're in a meeting and you need to quickly reference files. As Creative Cloud lets you collaborate with others, you can view comments, feedback and ratings on the move – perfect for when you are away from the office.

ADOBE COLOR CC

Price: Free

Compatibility: iOS 7.0 or later

This app used to be known as Adobe Kuler, but has been updated for CC. It lets you capture colour combinations when you are out and about using your iPad or iPhone's camera. The app then extracts the colours, which you can save as a theme. The theme is instantly uploaded to your other Adobe apps if you are connected to the Creative Cloud and you can share them with others via social media or email.



BEHANCE CREATIVE PORTFOLIO

Price: Free

Compatibility: iOS 7.0 or later; Android 4.0 or later

Two apps from Behance with close links to Photoshop. Desktop CC lets you link to your Behance portfolio and upload artwork, and these apps help you take your portfolio and inspirational artwork from other artists with you on the move. The main Behance app lets you browse the latest images on the website. The Creative Portfolio app lets you showcase your own artwork in an aesthetic manner, which is perfect for client meetings.



CREATIVE CLOUD TUTORIALS

Price: Free

Compatibility: iOS 7.0 or later

If you're still learning about Photoshop CC, or hoping to pick up a new program in the CC range, such as After Effects or Illustrator, then this free app gives you access to over 700 tutorials all about the different Creative Cloud apps. If you find yourself on a long commute with nothing to do, then you can still be productive by watching some of these videos and picking up pro tips.



05. EASY COLOUR-GRADING TECHNIQUES

Colour grading in Photoshop to get that truly cinematic effect takes experience from a practiced pro. If you are struggling to achieve the look you desire, then digital artist Antti Karppinen (**www.anttikarppinen.com**) has some words of advice to help you get the right effect without wasted effort: "I use various techniques when I colour grade my images. When the image is retouched to the point where I'm happy with it, I will start colour grading the image. First, I will try to find the overall tone to suit the image by putting a Selective Color adjustment layer on top of it. I choose White from the Colors drop-down and use sliders to get the highlights and lighter shades done. Then I select Blacks and tone the darker areas of the image. Last, I select Neutrals from the list and tweak the overall tones.

Similar shading can also be achieved with a Color Balance adjustment layer, selecting the separate areas from the drop-down menu (Shadows, Midtones, Highlights) and tweaking the sliders the way you want.

After this, I will add a Curves adjustment layer. Sometimes I like [slightly] washed-out colours so I will use Curves to add that washed-out feel to the black tones of the image. I also usually select other channels like Blue and turn the darker side more to the blue, and the lighter side more to the Yellow. In addition, on this image I used circular Gradient Map adjustment layers to get washed-out colour streaks at the edges of the image."

06. SET UP YOUR WORKSPACE

KEVIN ROODHORST (WWW.KEVINROODHORST.COM) DIGITAL ARTIST AT CREATIVE ADVERTISING STUDIO, SOUVEREIN, TALKS US THROUGH HIS WORKSPACE LAYOUT TO HELP HIM MAXIMISE HIS WORKFLOW

Workspace setup: I use a workspace setup for one screen. I choose to auto-collapse panels because this will give you the most space to work with

Use shortcuts: I use 'O' for Dodge and Burn, 'R' for Rotate canvas, Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+I for Image Size, CmdCtrl+Space+Zoom in or out to quickly navigate, Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G to clip layers and Cmd/Ctrl+G to group selected layers



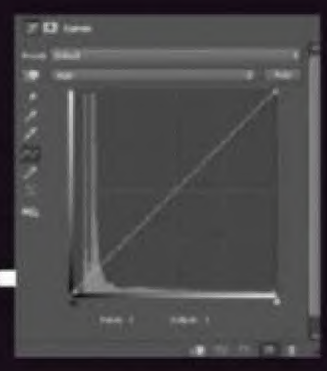
History palette: The History palette is very handy to go a couple of steps back. This is way more efficient then pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Z multiple times. Especially when working with a client sitting next to you, you can easily go to a certain stage in your project

Actions palette: Operations that require certain steps can be automated. You can record the steps and easily press play whenever you want that action. I use it, for example, to add noise to an image or to scale something





Brush palette: [I mostly use] the Brush palette to switch, for example, between Transfer, Shape Dynamics or Scattering. When you have the brush selected, Cmd/Ctrl+right-click to quickly choose another brush

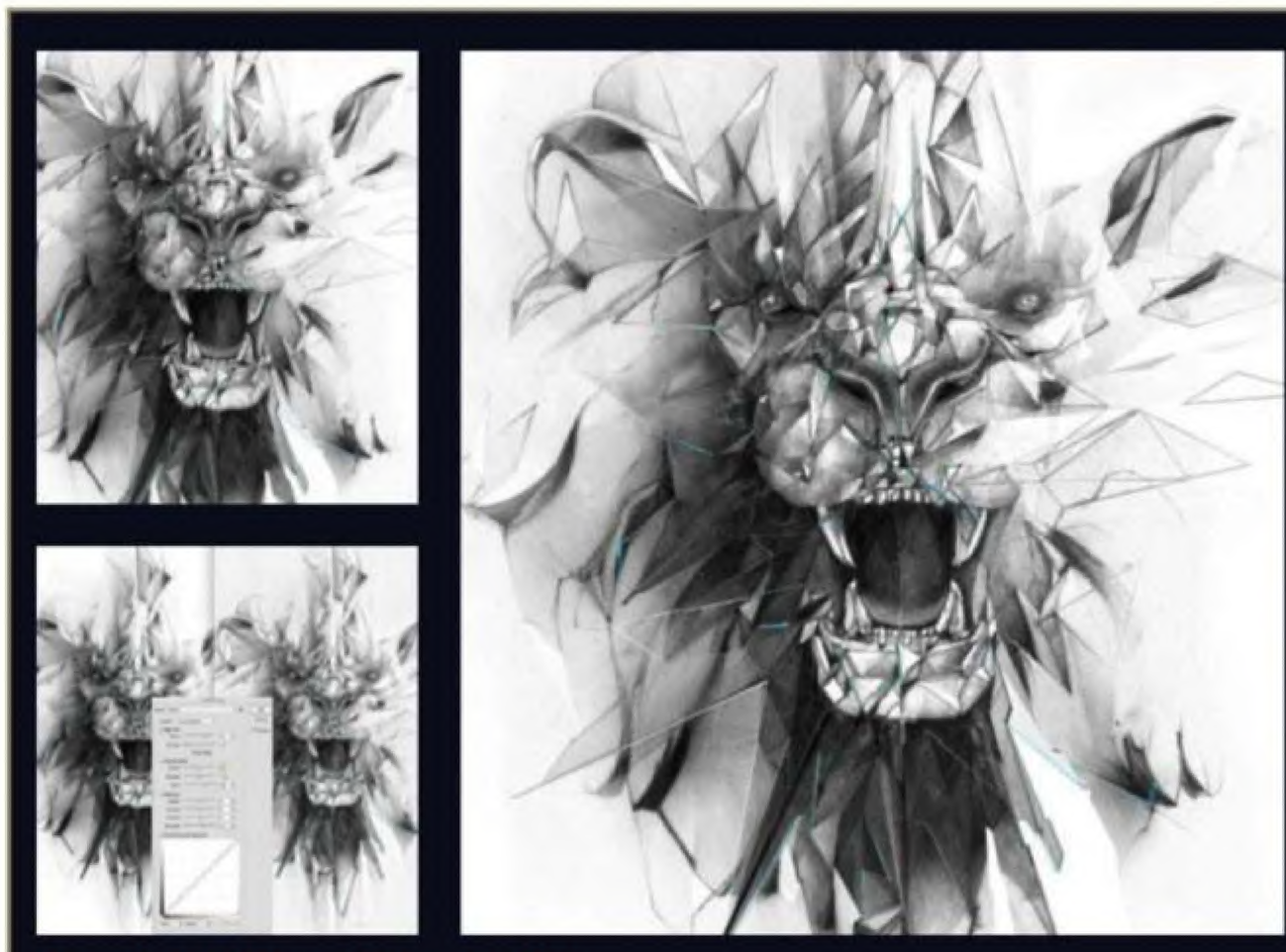


Adjustment properties: The adjustment properties window is a must have in your workspace. This controls all the adjustment layers. To speed up your workflow, set a keyboard shortcut for every adjustment layer



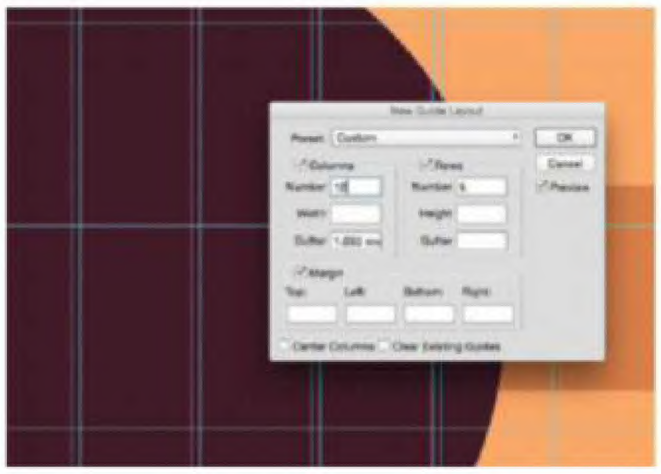
07. SPEED UP MOBILE DESIGN WITH INK AND SLIDE

Only launched at the end of 2014, Adobe's Ink and Slide tools are designed to help digital artists and designers who work on the go using an iPad, to create more accurate work. Ink is a fine-tip pressure-sensitive pen that can be used to draw precisely on the move. Slide is a digital ruler that complements the Ink, helping to create pixel-accurate shapes. The technology is provided by Adonit and is shipped from the company in the US. This means that UK-based customers, and those around the world, need to allow for shipping costs on top of the $174.99 for the products (which works out as $13-$15 to mainland UK). If you struggle to draw accurately on the iPad, then this could be a real timesaver and enhance your workflow. Even though it's fairly expensive, it's an investment.



08. FINISH WITH HDR TONING

Knowing the tricks to giving your images that high-end finish can really help your work stand out. Illustrator Alexis Marcou (www.alexismarcou.com) uses CC's HDR Toning option on his work: "A very useful filter that I add to almost all of my illustrations at the end of a project is HDR Toning (located under Image>Mode>HDR Toning). At the end of a project, I duplicate the whole composition with all the layers intact and then I flatten it. I then select HDR Toning where I do some minor adjustments. I tweak the Detail and the Strength, and after I am done, I use this as a filter on my final composition. I place it above all the layers and erase [areas] that I don't want so detailed looking."



09. EXPLORE GUIDE LAYOUTS

Photoshop CC has greatly improved its guides, which certainly isn't the most exciting thing in the world, but they are incredibly useful and can save you lots of time when it comes to alignment. For one, you can use an existing shape or object on your screen to produce guides, using the View>New Guides From Shape option. This will place guidelines around the boundaries of your shape or object that is selected in the Layers panel. This can help you align multiple shapes from one central point.

If you need more advanced guide control, then you can go to View>New Guide Layout, which presents a dialog with all of your options. If you already have guides on-screen, you can tick Clear Existing Guides, and also tick Preview so you can see your guide layout as you work. You can input values to add Columns and Rows, the Gutter value and Margins as needed, which makes doing complex layouts – in particular for print design – much easier.

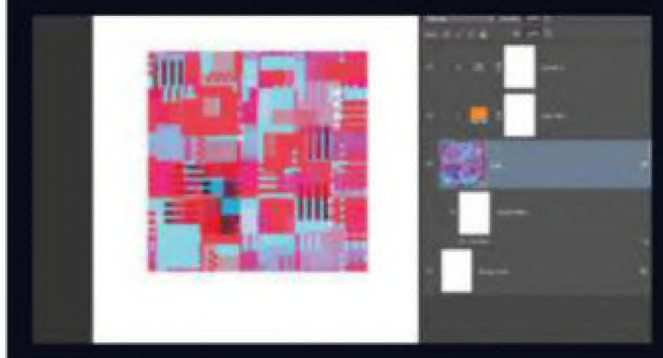
10. USE LINKED FILES

JAMES GODDEN (WWW.JAMESGODDENDESIGN.COM), DESIGNER AT WHITEHYPE STUDIO SOUTHAMPTON, TAKES US THROUGH THE CC TIMESAVER THAT IS LINKED FILES.



01 | PLACE LINKED

In the apparel graphics and print industry there is often a need to quickly re-colour artwork to suit trends, and this feature has proved to be a massive timesaver. To insert a linked file click File>Place Linked and navigate to the file that you want to place. I've used a simple pattern swatch.

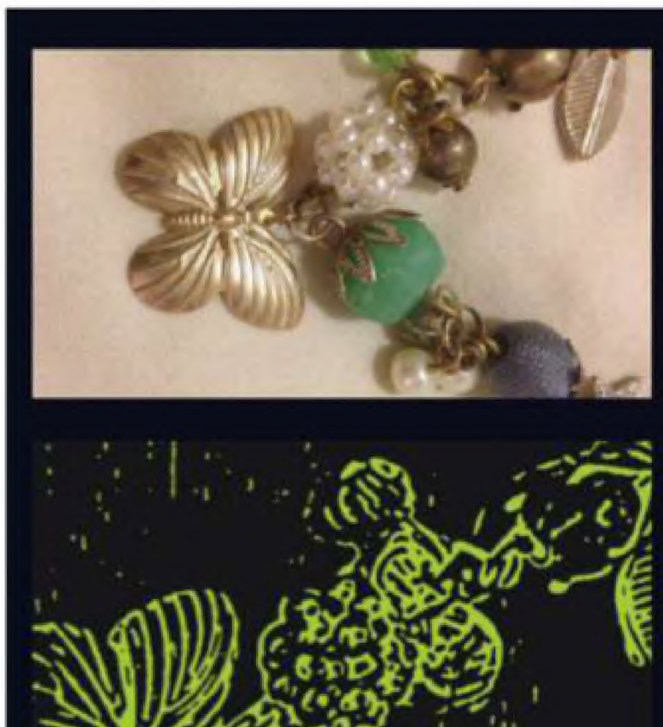


02 | ADD ADJUSTMENTS

It's important to remember that linked files are not actually contained within the document they are linked to, but are stored externally until they are rasterized. Here, the linked file had been edited with a Displacement Map smart filter and has a couple of adjustment layers applied to it.

03 | EDIT LINKED FILE

To quickly re-colour the swatch, double-click on the link icon in the bottom-right corner of the layer thumbnail. As the original artwork was an AI file, Illustrator will open. Make your changes, Save, and Photoshop will update the linked file. Multiple files can be inserted, allowing you to edit one master file instead of each one.





11. MOBILE VECTOR SHAPES

Recently, Adobe has been announcing a whole flurry of mobile apps to work alongside Photoshop CC and these can really help you stay productive when you are on the move. For example, Shape CC (similar to the Brush CC app featured later) lets you turn anything you see on your travels into a vector shape that can be imported into Photoshop or Illustrator for when you are out and about. You can take a picture with your iPhone or iPad (the apps are iOS only), upload from your camera roll or use assets from your Creative Cloud, then tweak the image to define the shape that you want to use. This literally opens up the whole world as potential sources of inspiration and assets, which is very exciting. Also, with the apps being free, and only the basic free Creative Cloud membership needed, they are worth trying.

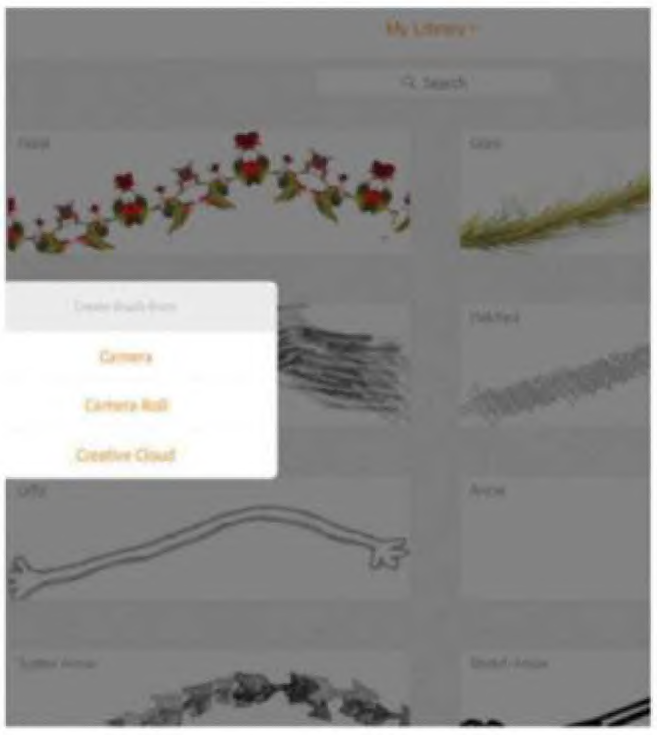
12. USING SMART GUIDES

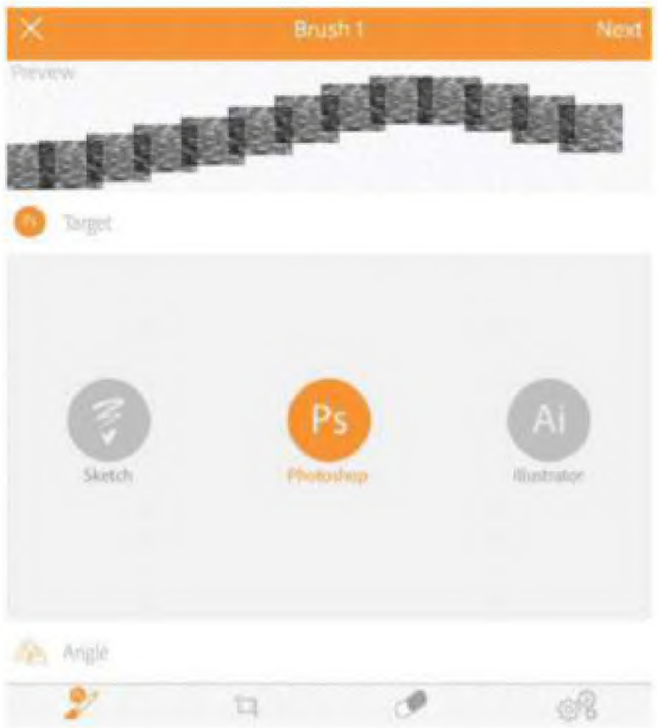
Graphic designer Jonathon Garratt (**wwwbehance.net/jgarratt)** agrees that for him, "the introduction of smart guides in Photoshop has been surprisingly useful and quite intuitive". He explains the features that have appealed to him: "With any piece of work you are putting together, it can be a great timesaver to have an automatic marker pop up rather than having to manually draw guides. With the update of Photoshop CC, the smart guides have almost caught up with InDesign and Illustrator, and when you're putting artwork together that has to align to other layers in the file, this is incredibly useful. The smart guides in CC also allow you to see measurements for an individual layer. Holding Cmd/Ctrl while hovering over a selected layer, brings up the guides showing the exact proximity to its surrounding layers. This is particularly useful when duplicating objects and holding down the Opt/Alt key will measure the distance between them."

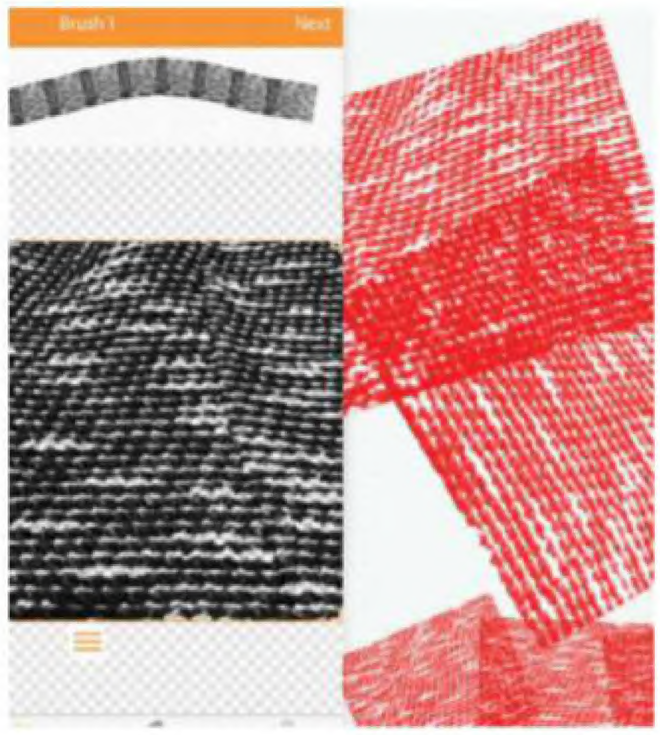


13. CREATE CUSTOM BRUSHES ON THE GO

USE THE NEW ADOBE BRUSH CC APP TO SIMPLY CREATE BRUSHES, WHEREVER YOU ARE, FOR USE IN PHOTOSHOP







01 | CHOOSE A SOURCE IMAGE

Open the app and choose the '+' icon from the side of the screen. You can import images already on your device, use the camera to snap something or pick from your Creative Cloud files. When you are happy with the image, click the tick to open it in the app.

02 | SET TARGET AND ANGLE

The first thing that you need to do is set your intended use – in our case this is Photoshop. This greyscales the image ready for using as a custom brush. You can also change the Angle of the brush strokes from the same screen, so that it flows in the best manner.

03 | EDIT THE BRUSH

You can crop areas of your image to use for the brush from the Crop section. In Refine, you can determine the white masking areas and manually erase parts of the image. The section on the right is for testing your brush, changing the colour, flow and size. Finally, you can save the brush.

14. USE PATH BLUR

The CC Blur Gallery has attracted a lot of attention from digital art professionals, as it cuts down on the time taken to achieve powerful blur effects. The Path Blur in particular is one that takes a series of once-complicated steps and deals with them in a single interface. Video game producer and digital artist Berli Mike (www.brlmk.net/), used the Path Blur (Filter>Blur Gallery>Path Blur) in the creation of this image: "This tool enables you to make motion blur in several directions in one go. Unlike the Motion Blur option, which will make your image blurred along a specific angle, this tool allows you to customise the way you want to blur your image, or sections on your work, with paths (just like the Pen tool). This image required me to make a directional blur in specific areas in order to make the splash look like it was coming out of the face." Here Berli Mike shares with us the steps he went through to create the blur in this colourful image using the Path Blur function.



Path Blur: Go to Filter>Blur Gallery>Path Blur. Now make a path like the one shown in the picture below (you can double-click to end the path and click again to start another one)



Masking: To make the blur appear in specific areas (in this case, at the pin point of the outside splashes), mask the image, but instead of clicking the Mask button, use Opt/Alt-click. This will make a black mask (hiding all of the blur), so that you can precisely blur the points of each splash without worrying about the other parts of the image that you have to erase (if you're using the plain white mask)



Curved paths: As I already mentioned, just like Pen tool, to make a curved path you can add a point inside a path and move it around to bend it. Apply the blur and you'll have your image blurred out just like it displays in the preview

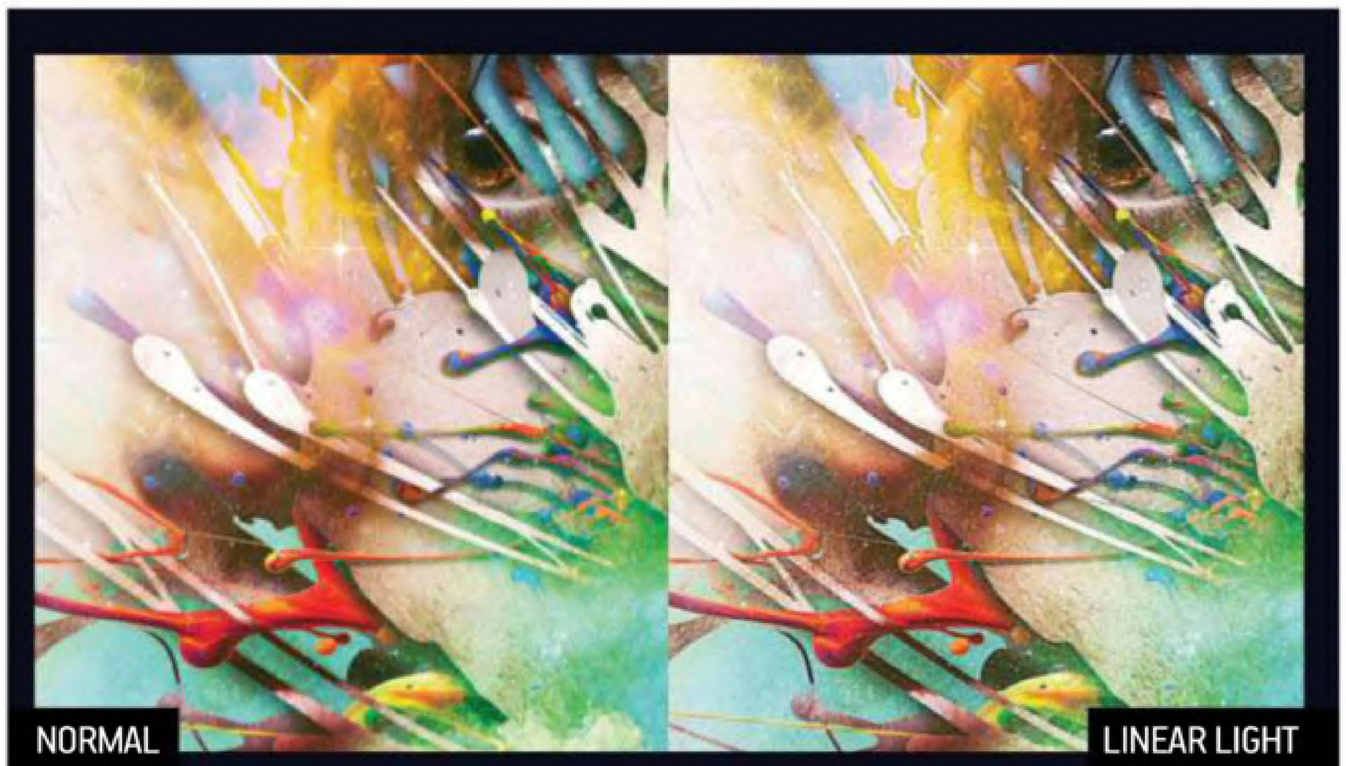


All finished: That's it! You're done blurring the image. A process that used to take more than one go, is simplified using this new method



15. USE THE NEW WELCOME SCREEN

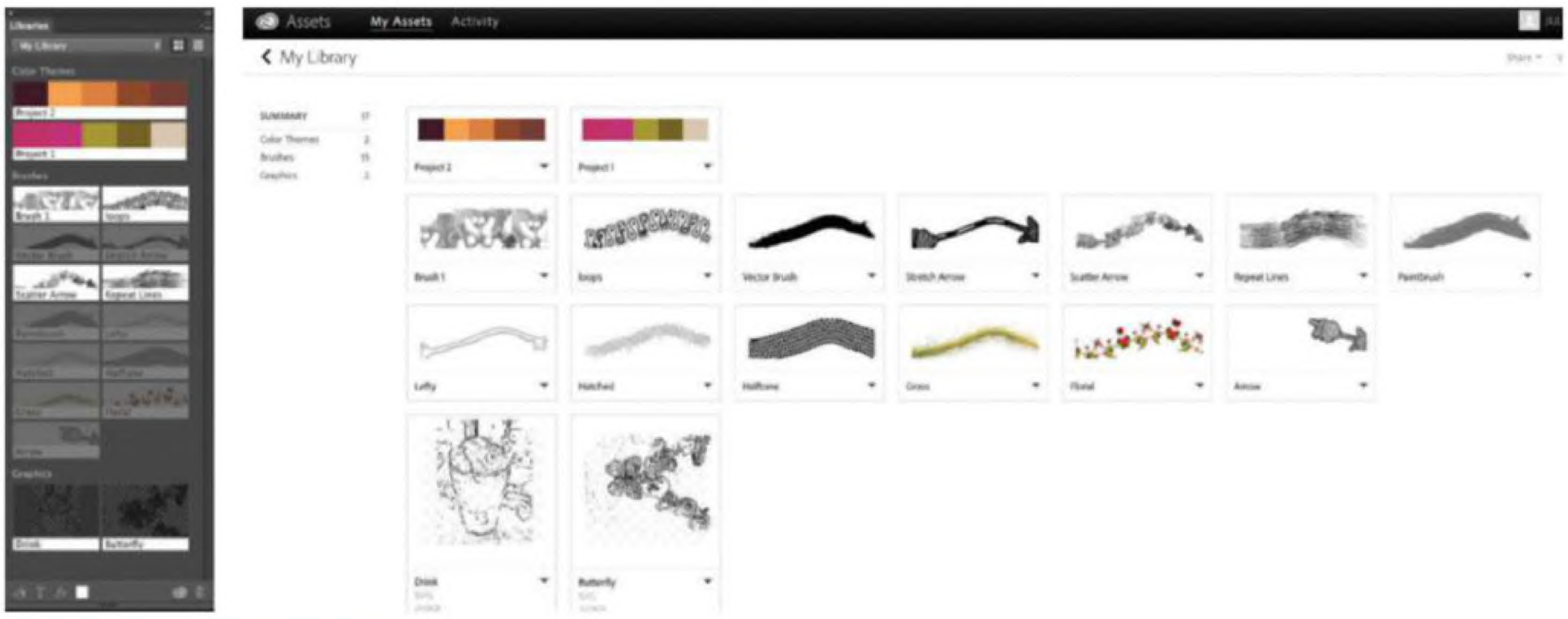
Welcome screens in software programs are often seen as an unwelcome annoyance, which goes quite against their name! However, the Photoshop CC Welcome screen has been considerably improved, and if you have been clicking through to get rid of it without really looking, then you could be missing out. The first page, Create, gives you quick links to common document sizes and recent files. New Features gives you a quick overview of the latest updates, which are categorised by the date that they were introduced. Getting Started has videos for beginners to Photoshop, which you can probably skip if you're reading *Advanced Photoshop*. The Tips & Techniques videos though, are great for learning the newer tools quickly. You can still click the checkbox to have the Welcome screen not come up, but it is worth looking at from time to time.



16. USE HIGH PASS AS A FINAL STEP

If you are forever sharpening your images to get the perfect finish, then try using the High Pass filter for great results that save you time and effort. Berli Mike (**www.brlmk.net/**) uses this method as a final step on all of his edits to make the whole image pop: "Why am I using High Pass instead of those Sharpening filters? Because it is safe and it's not very destructive. The first thing you need to do is make a flattened layer by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E and change the blending mode to either Overlay, Hard Light or Linear Light (depending on the image you are working on). Here we will use Linear Light, since this blending mode will make the image as sharp as it can get without destructing the contrast itself.

After you change the blending mode, press Cmd/Ctrl+U to bring up the Hue/ Saturation adjustment dialog to desaturate the image to black and white. Then you'll apply the High Pass filter, but never go beyond 3 pixels for the Radius or you'll end up destroying your image instead of making it sharper. Here you can see the difference before and after we apply the High Pass."

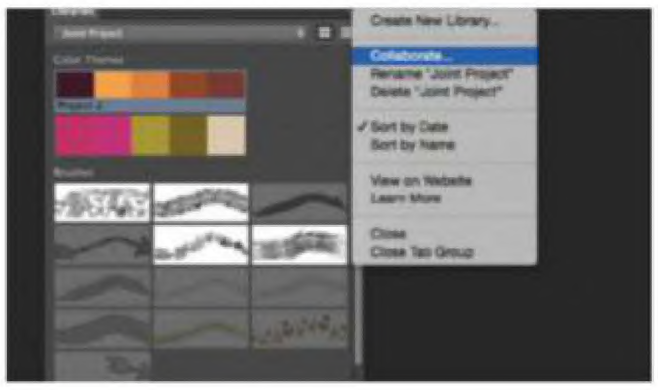


17. UNDERSTAND CREATIVE CLOUD LIBRARIES

Creative Cloud Libraries are incredibly useful if you use a lot of the mobile apps that Adobe has been releasing, as well as if you work across multiple Creative Cloud programs, such as Photoshop and Illustrator. Libraries can store everything that you create in apps like Color (for themes), Shapes CC (for vector shapes) and Brush CC (for custom brushes), or anything that you make in Photoshop and save them to the library. You can access your libraries online, as well by logging on to your Creative Cloud account. Assets can also be purchased from the Creative Cloud Marketplace, so there is a wide range of ways to capture assets to store in your libraries.

Once you have assets, it is easy to drag and drop them into projects or click on them to use; for example, you can pick colours directly from the themes. If you are creating on the move with mobile apps, then as long as you are logged into your Creative Cloud account, these are instantly available in other apps and on the desktop programs. Working in combination with all of these tools will save you hours of time transferring files and hunting down assets.

You can create multiple libraries as well, labelling them for different projects or types of asset. In order to view your libraries in Photoshop, you need to have the latest version of Photoshop CC (2014.2.2, released in December 2014). If they are not open, you can select Window>Libraries.



18. COLLABORATE ON LIBRARIES

Once you have your Creative Cloud Libraries set up, you can share them with others and allow them to add files to your library. This is very useful if you are working on a joint project and you all need access to the same assets, like text, logos and themes. In Photoshop CC, you can open the library that you want to share (it's best to be organised and have a separate library for a single purpose). From the drop-down menu in the top right, you will see the Collaborate option. Click on this and your browser will open, taking you to your online Creative Cloud account. Here you can input email addresses of who you want to invite to your library and add a message. Users can view, edit, rename, move and delete assets, as well as invite or remove other collaborators.

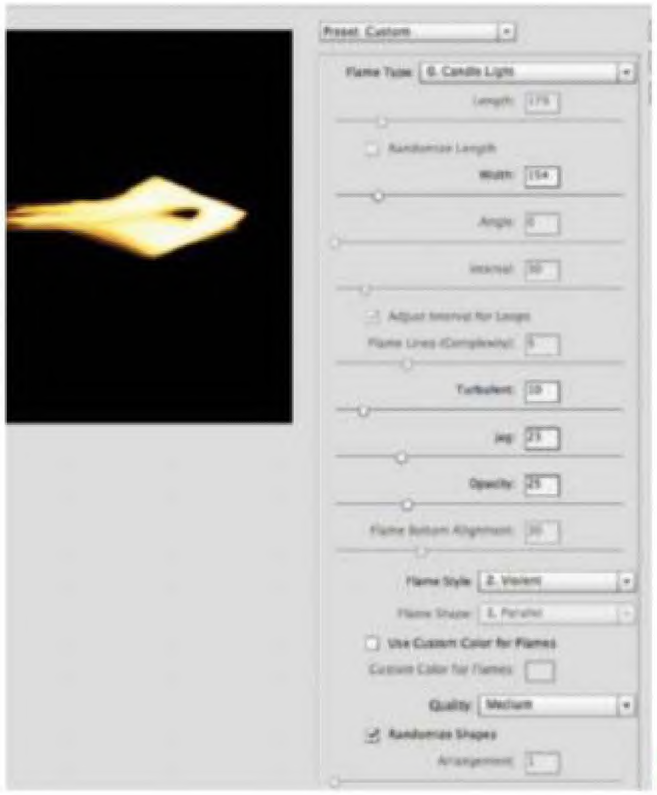


19. CLONE ACROSS MULTIPLE IMAGES

Save time and clone assets from one image to a new project to save time, says freelance graphic designer and Fashion Promotion student, Caroline Bowden (**www.behance.net/carolinebowden**). "The Clone Stamp tool is a really quick way to remove any imperfections – use Opt/Alt and click on the area you want to clone. You'll notice that when you move your mouse, the circle will contain the artwork that you cloned. Finally, simply click on the area that you want to be cloned and move your mouse to draw the cloned image in. No more re-shoots, just clone, clone, clone! This tool also works by cloning sections from other images into your image. For example, to design this Vans advert I decided to clone in the BMX rider from other photographs to create this action-packed advert that portrays the pathway he had taken."

20. USE SCRIPTED PATTERNS

Scripted Patterns can speed up some tasks that you perform, but they used to be pretty hidden away. Now you can get to them directly via the Filter>Render. There are three different options to choose from and each have a multitude of options to play with. Picture Frame generates frames and you have a wide selection to choose from. You can customise the elements that make up the frame to get exactly the look you want and save them as presets. Tree, inserts one of more than 30 tree shapes, each of which can be customised to suit, which can be real timesaver if you have landscape graphics to create. Finally Flame, which is the newest of the three, generates a flame effect along a selected path of any shape, perfect for quick special effects. We've used a custom arrow shape, set to Path, to create our flame effect.





21. SCRUTINISE YOUR LAYER MASK

When working with lots of layer masks you may forget which effects are where in your image. To see, simply Opt/Alt-click a layer's mask. This creates a black-to-white silhouette of your affected area.



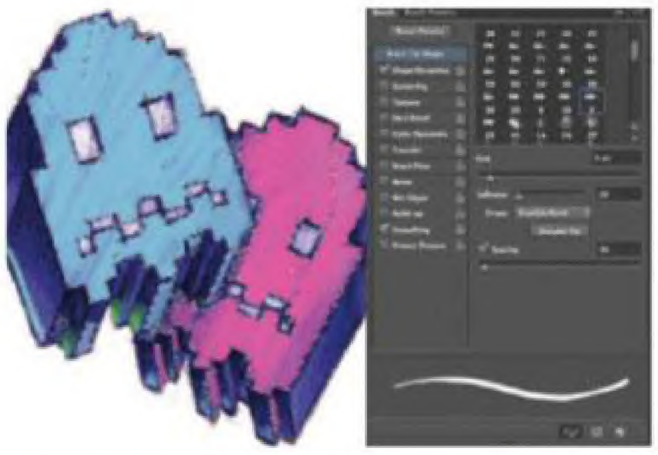
22. HAIR GRAFTING WITH TRANSFORM

Hair grafting is often applied to fix gaps in your model's hair. This can occur when the hair is pulled back and hair texture parts. Fill in the gaps by copy and pasting hair from the surrounding area, then placing and fixing shape and direction using Transform>Warp. Blend edges using a layer mask applied to with a 40% soft black brush to create smooth edge transitions. Curves can be applied to colour correct.



23. SPLIT TONING

Split toning in Photoshop used to be a protracted process, but not anymore. Simply apply a Gradient Map adjustment layer, open the Gradient Editor and activate Photographic Toning. These hidden presets will apply effects with a single click. You can tweak colour Stops and save your own styles.



24. REAL-WORLD BRUSHES

Hidden away in your Brush Presets are Erodible Brush settings, accessible with a selection of Photoshop brush styles. These are great at replicating real-world media such as pencil and crayon, simulating real-world application. As you work, your nib style will erode and soften just like it would with a traditional stylus. Just click the Sharpen Tip button to revert back to your original nib strength. This is a massive advantage for digital illustrators looking to create traditional looks.



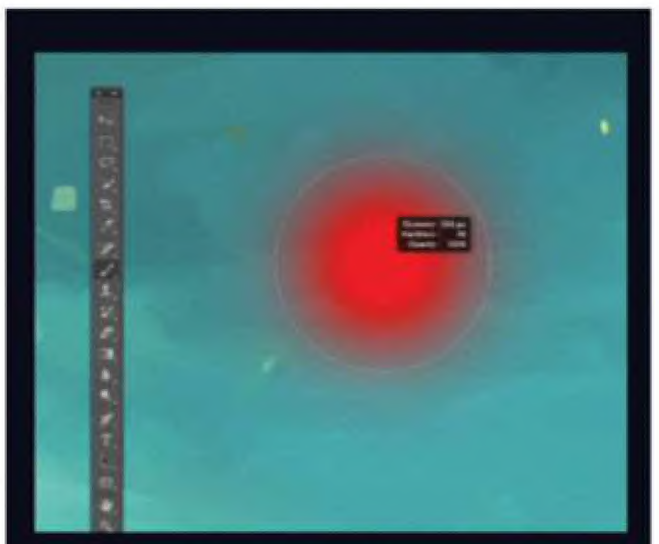
25. THE NEW LAYER PANEL

It's often said you should tag your layers to make them easier to find later on in the process. Now Photoshop CC shares the burden, letting you search your layer stack by Kind, Name, Effect, Mode, Attribute and Color.



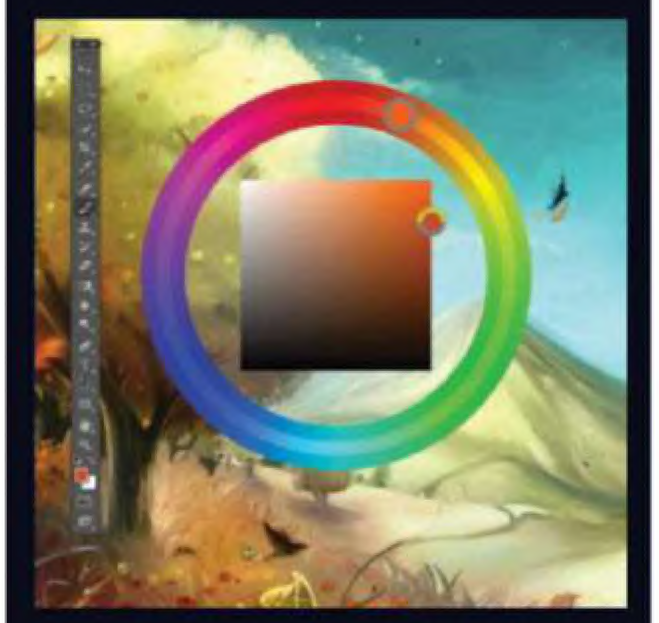
26. OPEN FILES FAST

You may want to open a large file just to take a screenshot, or to flatten the file and share with a client. Rather than going to File>Open, select File>Open first then hold Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt and select your file. Your layer file will now open faster but it will now open as a flat file for quick and easy access.



27. THE HUD BRUSH

Hold Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt to activate one of the HUD brush controls. Dragging left to right edits the brush's size, up and down the hardness.



28. THE HUD COLOR PICKER

Having to access the Color Picker when painting and designing can become mighty tedious. Instead press Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Cmd to activate the live HUD Color Picker. If you need to you can change the style of this in Preferences.



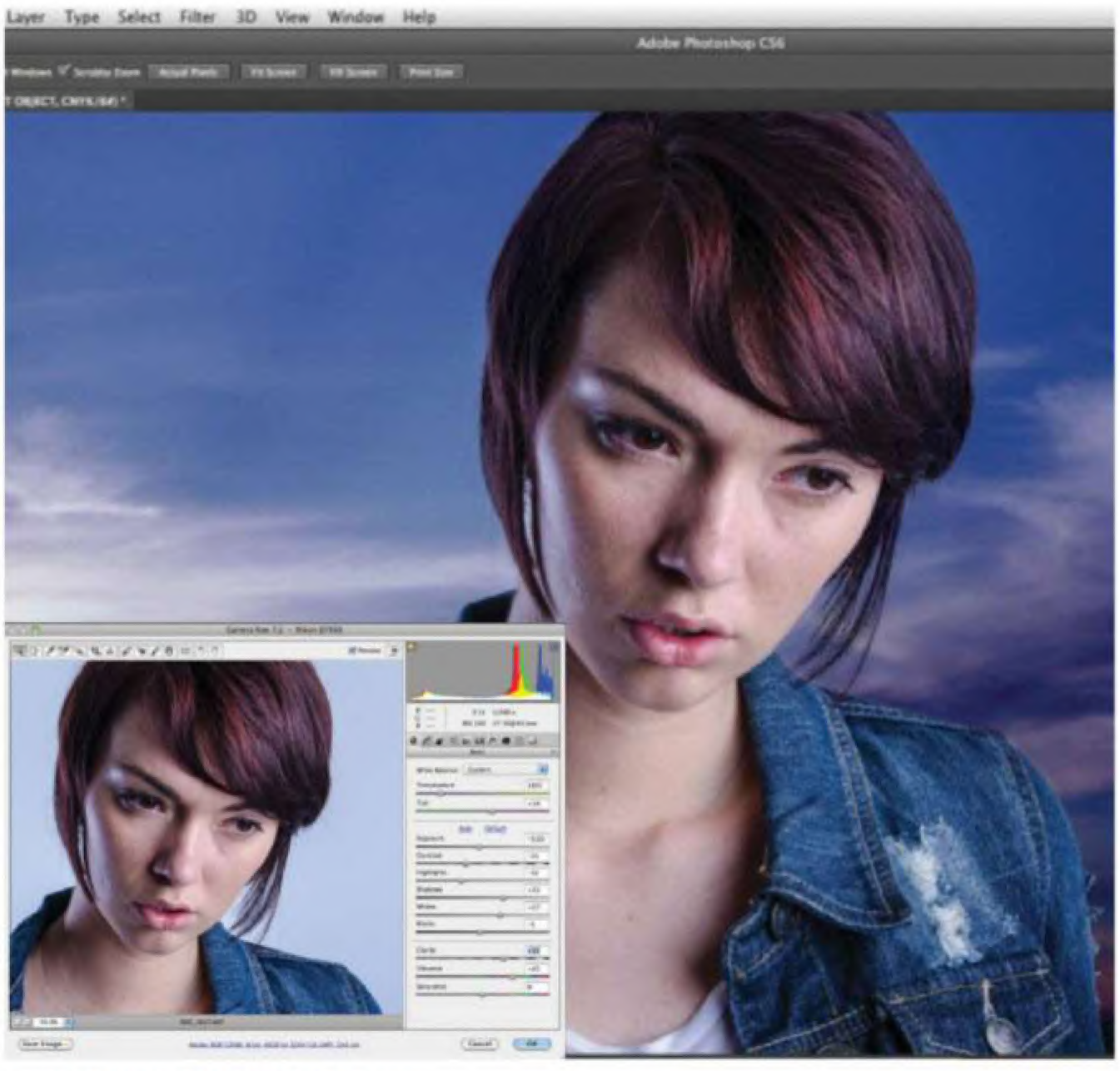
29. TRUE WEB COLOURS

Matching colour values in the Photoshop Color Picker to your code editor used to be a very protracted process, with repeat journeys between your web inspector, your code editor and Photoshop. CC has resolved this, but you may not have guessed, as Photoshop now accepts hashtag entry. Hex colours and three-digit value tones are applicable in your Color Values, where you can keep track of the two different tones in Photoshop and your code editor. This will save you a lot of time.



30. ACCURATE DEPTH OF FIELD

When photomanipulating you'll need to produce a good sense of depth of field to create realism. However, hastily applying Blur filters to your elements can mean you have to redo effects. Duplicating spare layers will double your file's size, so comp your images together. When you need to add blur to a foreground or background element, you can convert its layer to a Smart Object first. Now you can apply Blur filters and tweak them.



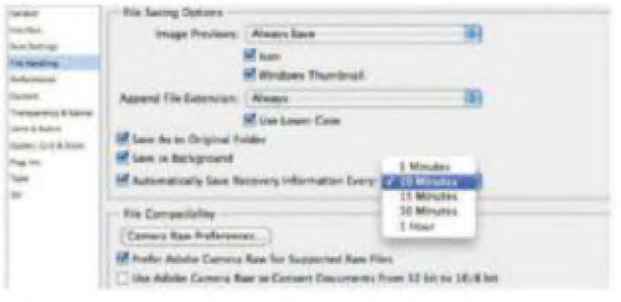
31. RAW SMART OBJECTS

Some photo editors like using Camera Raw. Some like using Photoshop. Why not use both? Make your edits in Camera Raw then hold Shift and select Open Object. This will send your image to Photoshop as a Smart Object. You can add to this, but double-click your layer to reopen Camera Raw and edit your original settings. Camera RAW ships with CC, which should make for an even more improved workflow.



32. SCRIPTED PATTERNS

The Pattern Overlay layer style is often overlooked. To grab your attention this now lets you create your own scripted patterns. Simply create a single visual element or shape inside Photoshop, select and save this as a Pattern, activate your Fill dialog box (Shift+F5) and activate Scripted Patterns. You can choose from a list of presets that apply cool effects. These are perfect for designing wallpaper, fashion patterns and more.



33. USE THE AUTO-SAVE

Ever got halfway through a project only for Photoshop to crash out? Ever forgotten to save? Ever lost it all? Well now you don't have to stomach the heartache, with Photoshop CC's Auto-Save options. You can set intervals by going to Preferences>File Handling.



34. THE NEW TYPE HIERARCHY

Photoshop CC includes Paragraph and Character styles. Select Typography from the Workspace options to activate all associate panels. Create a Paragraph Style by adding a Type layer, selecting your type then double-clicking the Basic Paragraph layer. You can set options in the appearing dialog box, which initially save as your first Paragraph Style. Continue to create new presets by clicking the Create a New Paragraph Style icon and making settings in the associated dialog box. You can go back in and edit presets, saving by clicking the tickbox icon at the foot of the panel. Setting Character styles works in pretty much the same way.



35. LEARN TO INTERPOLATE

People will tell you that resizing an image in Photoshop can cause distortion and they're right. However, you can minimise adverse effects by using the Interpolation options. You can find related commands in Preferences> General>Image Interpolation menu options.

Set Bicubic for transforming gradients; Bicubic Smoother for enlarging; and Bicubic Sharpening for reducing size. CC users can now find an Interpolation drop-down option in the above menu when activating the Transform>Scale option. Set this to Bicubic Automatic and Photoshop selects the right functionality for you when resizing.



36. SWITCH BETWEEN SELECTION TOOLS

Photoshop supplies the means to swap between the Polygonal Lasso and (freehand) Lasso tools during application, by simply pressing the Opt/Alt key. Alternative options will kick in once you start applying. This is great when you have to select straight and organic edges in the same image.

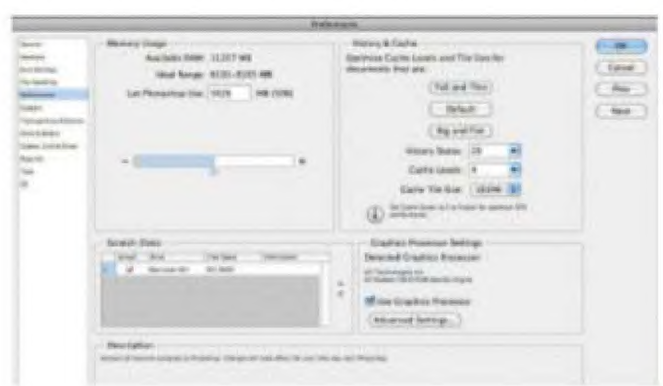


38. SELECT SKIN FAST

There's now a super-fast way for retouchers and photo editors to select skin. Activate the Marquee tool, Cmd/Ctrl-click your image and choose Color Range. Inside you'll find Skin Toning in the Select dropdown options, editing targeted areas simply using the Fuzziness slider. This is just another awesome one-click option from Photoshop CC.

37. OPTIMISE YOUR PERFORMANCE

The Preferences panel may seem a little boring, but it's littered with options that will ultimately determine Photoshop's performance. This is a pretty important place to start to make the most of the program's options. A few tips would be to keep your History States at reasonable values, so as not to have your History Palette devouring RAM. If you work with flat images or small PPI resolutions (up to 5MB), set your Cache Levels between 1 and 2. Finally, always assign the right MB value in the Memory Usage>Let Photoshop Use settings. If you're a dedicated Photoshop user, setting this up to 75% will have you fully optimised. However, if you multi-task in your browser and email systems then 50% is a safer option.





39. CONTENT-AWARE CUTOUTS

You are now able to remove and reposition a model or object seamlessly in a single image. This is a great advantage when trying to create the most believable result possible. Simply make a selection of the model or object in question then press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate a new layer. Cmd/Ctrl-click your duplicate model/object layer thumbnail and create a selection. Activate your original layer and press Cmd/Ctrl+F5, setting Content Use>Content-Aware in your Fill dialog box. This will fill in your selection by cloning the surrounding details into this space. Activate your duplicate model or object layer and apply the Edit>Puppet Warp tool to reposition seamlessly.



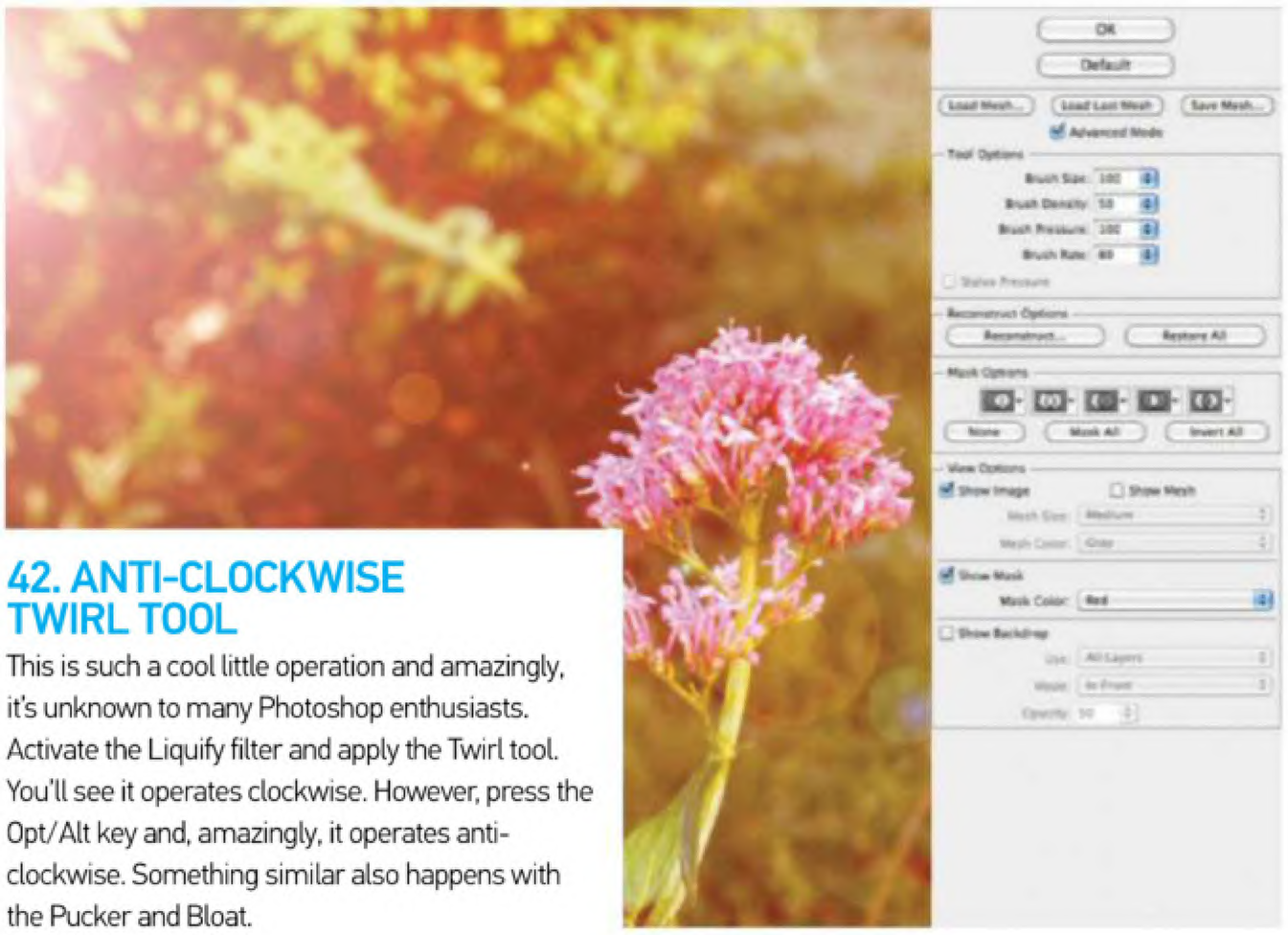
40. ENHANCED LIQUIFY TOOL

The Liquify tool has become a favourite among retouch enthusiasts. In the past professionals have shied away from this option, as the minimum size controls not only shifted and blurred pixels, but application was impossible at worst and jerky at best. This meant that constant revisions were required. However, thanks to Photoshop CC's improved GPU-acceleration, Liquify functionality has been radicalised. Now application is live, meaning no more delayed rendering. Also Brush Size has improved from 1,500px to an impressive 15,000px. This means better handling of pixels when editing and less distortion.



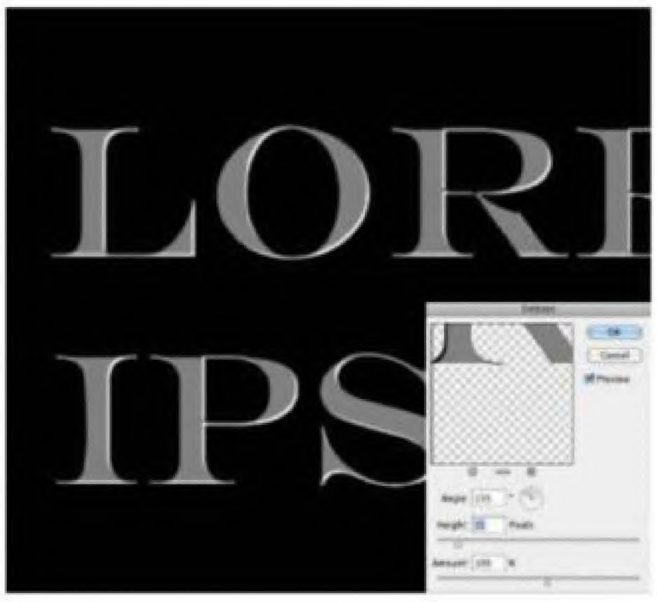
41 CROP TOOLS

With the updates to the Crop tool, your image now moves within the fixed boundaries of your cropped area, making it easier to align and scrutinise selected areas. This is complemented by the available set of View options, including Golden Ratio, Rule of Thirds and other guides. A one-click Rotate option lets you swap between landscape and portrait views. There is also a Perspective Crop tool, so apply this and adapt individual edge control points to correct and create symmetrical visual elements. This is a bonus for image editors looking to achieve keystone effects, or create flat 2D textures.



42. ANTI-CLOCKWISE TWIRL TOOL

This is such a cool little operation and amazingly, it's unknown to many Photoshop enthusiasts. Activate the Liquify filter and apply the Twirl tool. You'll see it operates clockwise. However, press the Opt/Alt key and, amazingly, it operates anti-clockwise. Something similar also happens with the Pucker and Bloat.



43. TYPE FILTERS

Those familiar with the Type tool know that once you apply a type layer you can't then go and add a filter to it, unless you rasterise. That's not ideal if you want to resize your type layer, however, you can turn to the power of Smart Objects. Make your Type layer one by Cmd/Ctrl-clicking your layer and selecting Convert to Smart Object.



44. LAYER COMPS

At one time or another you'll need to share multiple revisions of your work, so instead of cluttering your layer stack with Groups and Smart Objects, utilise the Layer Comps command. This lets you take snapshots of key edits in your layered images, save these as presets and play these stages back at any time. Just make your tweaks before clicking the Create New Layer Comp icon. You can have multiple Layer Comp presets activated through one-click functionality.





45. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CONTENT-AWARE MOVE

The Content-Aware Move tool in CC is a brilliant way to edit, especially when you want to reposition elements to new locations. It's a great way to perfect composition in your snaps and minimise time-intensive retouching techniques. Make a selection of the element you want to move, then activate the Content-Aware Move tool and drag your selected item to its new position. Photoshop-automated cloning and healing fills the area you leave behind. However, be aware that artefacts can be left behind and minimal retouching may be required after all. Setting the correct Adaptation option will also help. The From Very Loose option selects more from the surrounding area, while Very Strict does exactly the opposite.

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PRO PHOTO COMPOSITES

TAKE CONTROL OF LAYERS, SMART OBJECTS, BLEND MODES AND MASKS TO CREATE YOUR BEST-EVER PHOTOSHOP ARTWORK



01. ADD MYSTERY TO THE CHARACTER

Adding something special in your artwork always makes it unique and different. In this artwork I added some mystery to my character, as you can see I covered her eyes. They are important to show emotions, so by covering the eyes and working with the neutral expression of the character, she became unpredictable and you can't tell what she is thinking about.

02. COMPOSE A BALANCE

Composition is the most important part of the artwork. We don't want our work to look cluttered in some parts and empty in others, but it's not the case for everything. For cinematic scenes like this, though, we need a balanced composition. For this illustration, I added some pipes behind the character to fill out the empty space behind her.

03. ADD MOODY LIGHTING

Most futuristic movies and videogames focus on war or post-apocalyptic stories, so since our character looks more like a cyborg built for battle, I decided to make her look like she's coming out of a battlefield by adding some dark clouds and particles that look a little bit chaotic, but not too much so as to not ruin our composition.

04. ENHANCE FOCUS

Shading adds a focal point to the image. Our focal point here is the face and torso; we want to lead the eyes of the viewer to go to the best part of the image first, then the rest. So for that we need to darken the bottom area of the image with a gradient. Also it's necessary to add shadows on the model for a more realistic look.

05. SYMMETRY

In photomanipulation, it can be hard and time-consuming to make your stocks look believable in perspective, especially if you have a symmetrical character like this, so to save some time and focus more on the design. You can choose a model like this, facing forward, that way you can always go back if you need to make changes, and duplicate and flip it again.



06. USE THE RIGHT STOCK

To make the suit for the model, we need stock that has a futuristic feel, and bikes are the perfect example! So we need two types of stock, small parts for details like muscles and bones and big parts to fill the empty spaces and define the shapes of the character. You can leave the bike brand showing like I did on her shoulders for small details.

07. WORK ON ANATOMY

In order to create a believable sci-fi character (cyborg, exoskeleton, etc), you need to be aware of human anatomy, because it's really necessary for the character to move properly. If you're not very familiar with anatomy, you can take some photo references and place your cut-outs over the bones and muscles; it's good practice for beginners.

08. USE ONE BRIGHT COLOUR

Our scene is pretty serious, so using desaturated colours is best, and it's also good because our character is in the middle of chaos so there's going to be a lot of dust and smoke in the air and that will affect the atmosphere. But using desaturated colours alone can make your work look a little bit flat, so to avoid that I added some blue elements here and there.



09. APPLY TEXTURES

We mentioned that our scene was post-apocalyptic, and our cyborg has just come out of a battlefield, so her body has definitely got some damage to it. This kind of detail should not be neglected because this is what gives the artwork credibility and realism. So what I did is I took some scratches and dirt textures, and applied them to the mechanical parts.

10. CREATE DYNAMISM

Adding elements of motion in your scene can be really great, because it makes your work look in motion rather than static. In this scene I added small particles with motion blur. Other examples are smoke or fire of elements from the scene, depending on what kind of direction you're going for.



OUR EXPERT

SOUFIANE IDRASSI
www.behance.net/soufiane_idrassi

Soufiane Idrassi is a digital artist based in Morocco. He specialises in album and book cover art and poster designs and describes his style as dark fantasy.



OUR EXPERT
KEVIN ROODHORST
www.kevinroodhorst.com

Kevin Roodhorst is based in the Netherlands and specialises in advertising and promotional images using Photoshop, Illustrator, RealFlow and Cinema 4D.

11. SPEED UP

Use Actions for speeding up simple tasks like resizing or adding noise. Actions speed up and automate repetitive tasks.

12. TIMESAVERS

Learn the keyboard shortcuts for the things you do most often, like creating new layers or clipping masks. It saves a lot of time!

13. COMPOSE, COLOUR, CONTRAST

First start with the composition before you get into grading colours and contrast. The composition will lead the behaviour of colour and contrast.

14. ETHEREAL EFFECTS

Use the Tilt-Shift blur for a nice depth of field effect that focuses the viewer's attention on the main subject.

15. RETOUCHING TOOLS

The Clone Stamp and the Healing Brush are my most-used tools when retouching.

16. SOFTWARE COMBOS

Try to combine different software to create your artwork. This expands your possibilities. I use Photoshop, Illustrator and 3D software.

17. FILTER FLOURISHES

When drawing hairs use the Filter>Other>Maximum afterwards for more realism. It gives you really tight control over expanding selections.

18. GO BACK

Use the History palette in your workspace to quickly go back to a certain point. This is useful when you're experimenting with edits.

19. BLEND MODES AND ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

Experiment with the different blending modes. For example, set a Curves adjustment to Screen or Multiply and see what you get!

20. MASTER MASKS

To cut out objects or people, never use the Pen tool, always mask with the Brush tool – you can paint details back in if you need them.





OUR EXPERT

STU BALLINGER
www.behance.net/stuballinger

Stu Ballinger is a young graphic designer from Australia. He's currently studying for a Bachelor of Visual Arts degree.

21. RENDER AND RE-RENDER

The centre of any piece of abstract art is the render. While one render can be sufficient, you can build more complex structures by compositing multiple renders in Photoshop. To make your work shine, render many different variations of your object with different sizes and rotation.

22. CREATE DEPTH

Depth is very important to abstract artwork, and there are a few methods that are easy to use with great effects. Try placing a render into your document in front of the main composition with a light blur effect to give the illusion that the object is sitting close to the 'camera'.

23. SYMMETRY IN COMPOSITION, ASYMMETRY IN EFFECTS

When working on a piece with a symmetrical composition, try to vary the effects around a little. Lights, flares, textures etc should be placed evenly throughout the piece but not necessarily in the same places. Try to vary things such as light intensity, light colour and texture evenly.

24. OUTLYING COLOUR

When working with one or two colours in a piece, things can start to get a little boring to look at. The introduction of a colour that is radically different can really change it up. In a blue/purple based piece, a bright highlight colour such as orange can really breathe life into the artwork.

25. WORK WITH SMART OBJECTS

A lot of the time in abstract art, you end up with many duplicates of layers, each with their own effects and changes. A good way to keep track of these objects is to keep them as Smart Objects, so you can view the list of effects applied to the layers. This also allows you to swap and change your objects easily.



MASTER PRO COMPOSITES

LEARN TO USE WARP TRANSFORMATIONS, DISPLACEMENT MAPPING, CLIPPING MASKS, LAYERING, AND EFFECTS TO CREATE A PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

In this tutorial you will learn how to use a combination of warping, displacement mapping and clipping masks applied to vector shape layers, in order to turn our chosen model into a complex vector composite. A constructive methodology will be followed and a cumulative layering of elements and basic lighting effects, to create depth and creative lighting effects. *Digitalis* is a science-fiction photomanipulation inspired by the transhumanist concept of transcendence, with the merger of humans and machines at the technological singularity. *Digitalis* is a cybernetic woman who exists at the periphery in both the physical and the digital world, part human, part machine, part digital information. She signifies digital escapism in a modern society and embodies the need to escape the bondage of humans' ephemeral, physical existence.



OUR EXPERT

IAN JAMIESON
www.hypedinteractive.com
@ianjamdesign

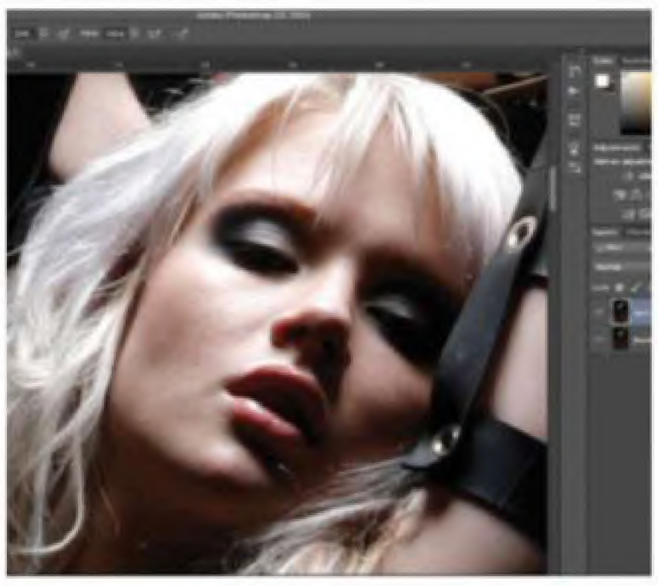
Ian is an artist, designer and web developer. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, he is the Creative Director and Head of Development of **Matchdeck.com**, and owner of Hyped Interactive, an independent design studio.

RETOUCHING AND SETUP

RETOUCH SKIN AND SETUP WORKING LAYERS

01 REMOVE SPOTS AND BLEMISHES

Open the model image. For this tutorial, use the free stock image *Rubber Fairy* by Marcus Ranum, **http://mjranum-stock.deviantart.com/.** Hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the layer and rename as 'spot-removal'. Use the Spot healing brush tool and patch tool to remove any small, prominent blemishes. Don't rely on this for tone smoothing or the skin will lose texture.



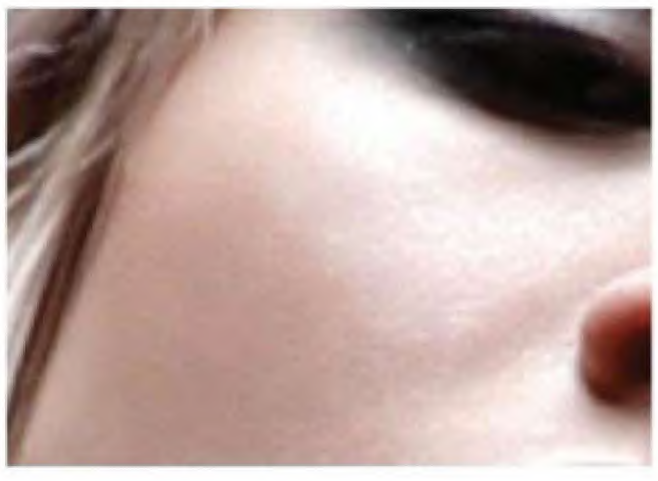
02 CREATE SKIN SMOOTHING LAYER

Opt/Alt+click the Create New Layer icon at the bottom of the layers palette. Name the layer 'skin-smoothing-basic'. Set the blending mode to Soft Light and check the 'Fill with Soft-Light-Neutral Color' (50% gray) option. Hit OK to create the layer.



03 EVEN SKIN TONES

Select a soft, round brush. Zoom into the skin with contrasting shading. Hit Opt/Alt, select the Eyedropper tool, and fill the foreground and background colour paletes with samples from the light/dark areas. Select the Skin-Smoothing layer. Use a 2px brush at 10-30% Opacity and smooth the skin. Gradually widen the brush and reduce opacity to even large areas. When finished, select all layers, Ctrl/right-click and convert into a Smart Object, named 'Original'. Save as 'retouched-original.psd'.



WORK IN PROGRESS

ENHANCE YOUR MODEL



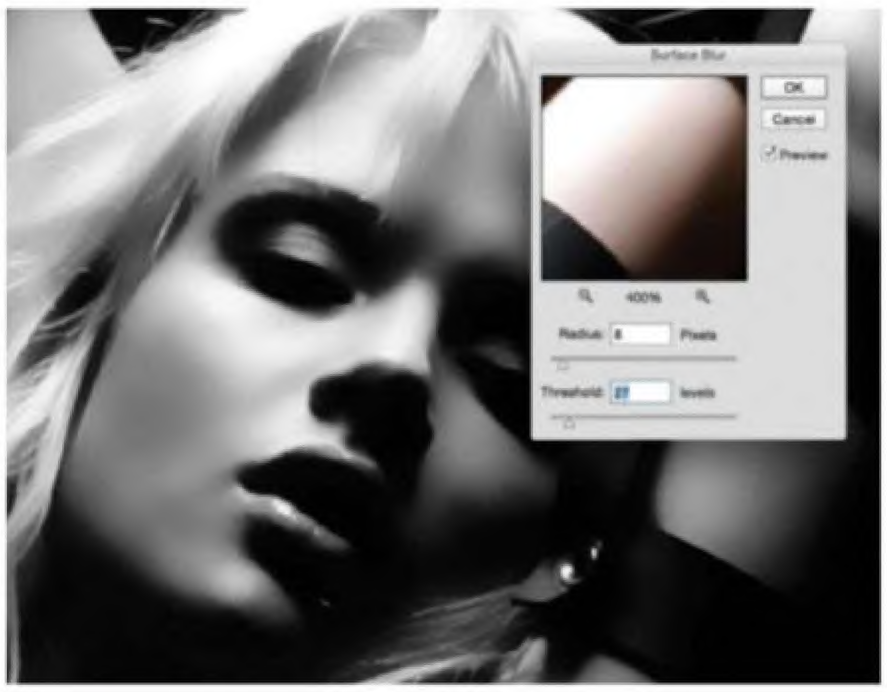
Progress 1: Retouch blemishes



Progress 2: Layer model with vector shape layers

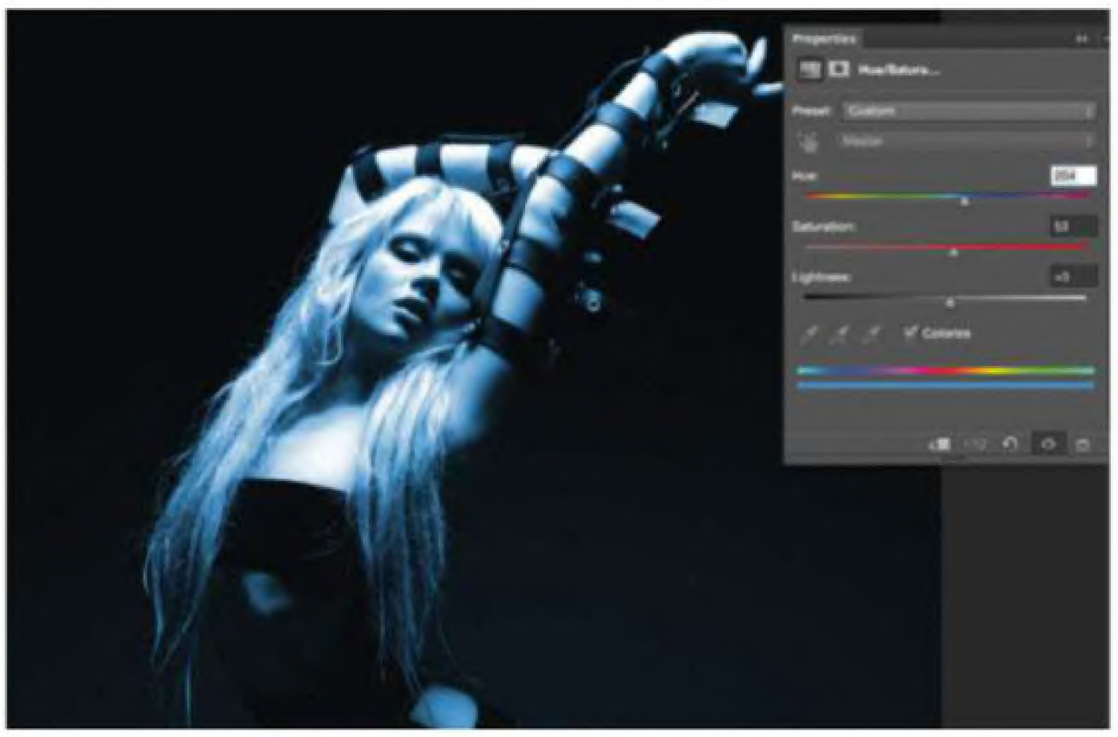


Progress 3: Apply the lighting effects



04 CREATING THE DISPLACEMENT MAP

Displacement mapping lets you use an image's highlights and shadows to create a gradient contour that acts as a 3D surface where you can add new layers, similar to papier-mâché. To do this, add a black and white adjustment layer to desaturate the model. Now, create a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer and up the contrast to build a steep gradient without losing detail. Select the original layer and go to Filter>Blur>Surface Blur. Set a Radius of 8 and a Threshold of 27. Merge the layers together and save as 'displacement-map.psd'.



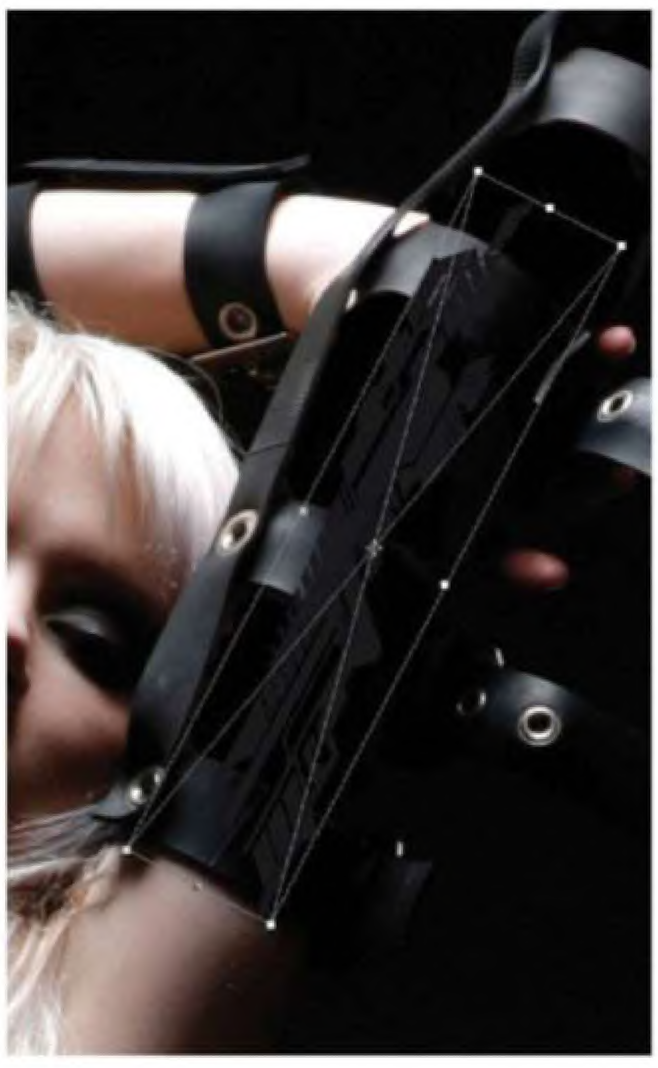
05 CREATING THE COLORIZED UNDER-LAYER

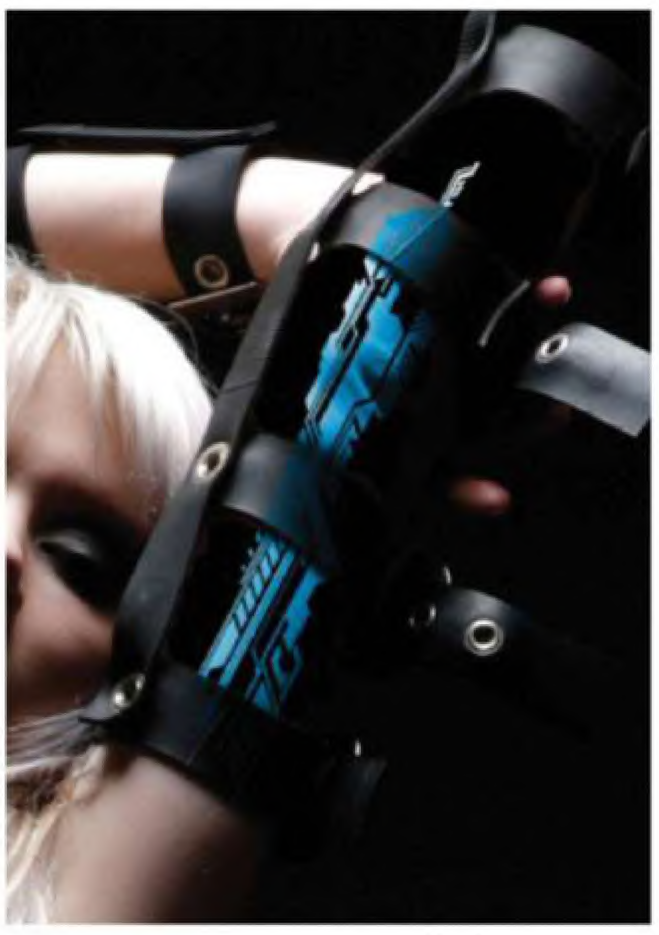
To create the half-human, half-machine hybrid, you will work with two versions: the original as the top human layer, and an electric blue colorized version, to use as a clipping mask which will give the vector shapes colour and texture. To create this colorized under-layer, duplicate the original smart layer. Create a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and check the Colorize option. Set the Hue to 204, the Saturation to 53 and the Lightness to +3. Select both the duplicate Original and Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Then Ctrl/right-click>Convert to Smart Object. Name this layer 'Colorized' and hide for now.

QUICK TIP

With Photoshop CC, you have the option to use linked Smart Objects, which has the advantage of providing a single, shared asset that affords consistency across all your duplicate layers. With Linked Smart Objects, it's easy to effect changes that manifest globally across all instances of the Linked Smart Object.







06 BACKGROUND AND MASKED OVER-LAYER

Create a new layer. Sample the black from the background and fill the new layer. Rename this layer 'Background' and move it down to become the lowest layer. Duplicate the original and keep a hidden copy for later. Select the visible copy and click 'Add Vector Mask' in the Layers palette. Go to the brush tool. Set the Size to 20 px and the Hardness to 50%. With the vector mask, mask away areas you want to replace with the vector shape layers. You can be rough initially and deep-etch detailed areas, like the hair, in another layer later.

07 DRAW AND COLLATE YOUR VECTOR SMART LAYERS

To create the vector smart layers, you can hand-draw high-tech shapes using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. You can also rely on found brushes and other resources, such as Go Media's Arsenal vector packs, to save some time. You can also brush directly onto new layers within the design, as you will be shown later.

08 PLACE, TRANSFORM AND POSITION VECTOR SHAPES

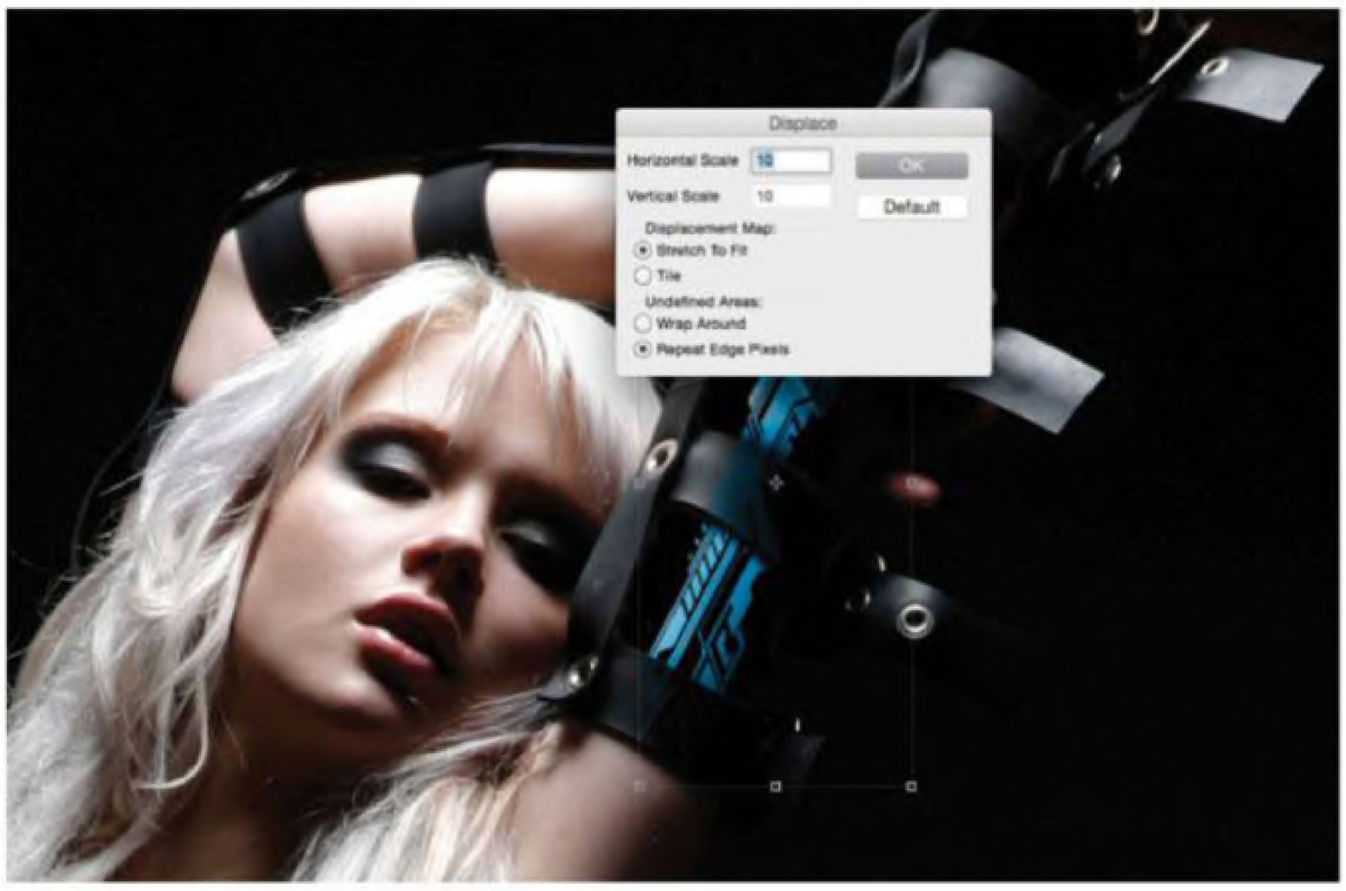
Now begin to cover areas of the model that you have masked out with our vector shape layers. Copy and paste the first shape from Illustrator. Choose Smart Object in the paste options menu. Rotate, transform and move the shape into roughly the right size and position over the triceps of our model. Rename the layer 'Tricep-1'. Duplicate the Colorized layer, move it above the vector shape, and set it as visible. Hold down Opt/Alt and click between the layers to set it as a Clipping Mask.

LAYER THE MODEL

DISPLACE, WARP AND VECTOR SHAPE LAYERS

09 DISPLACE VECTOR SHAPE LAYER

Select the 'Tricep-1' layer. Go to Filter>Distort>Displace. Set the Horizontal and Vertical scale to 10. Select Stretch to Fit and Repeat Pixels>OK. Go to the 'displacement-map.psd' created in Step 4. The shape will mould according to the contours in the map. To adjust the position of the layer, toggle the visibility of the Displace filter, located under Smart Filters, to reset and reapply the displacement effect.



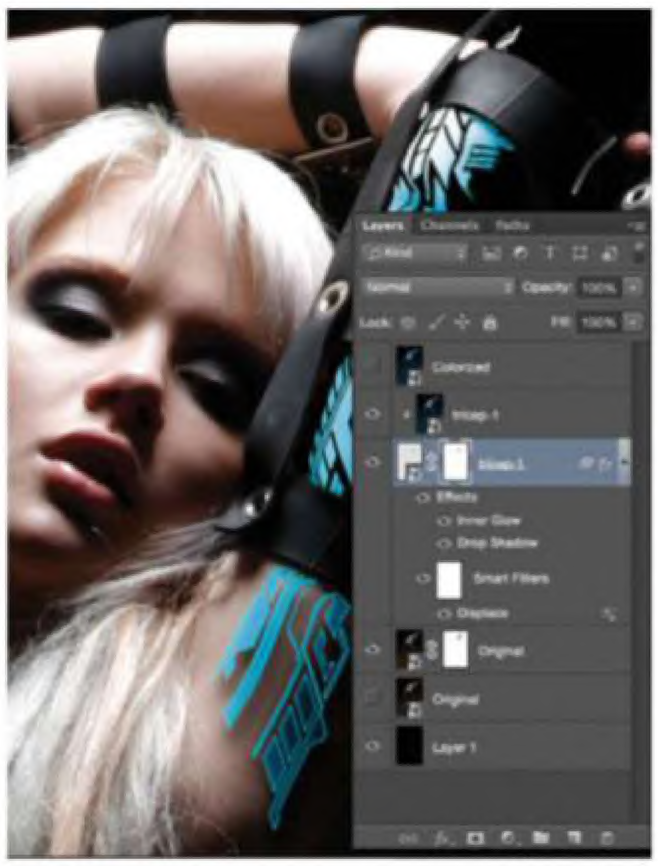


10 ADD MORE LAYERS

Repeat step 9 to add more vector shapes. Sometimes displacement mapping will yield undesirable results. To get more fine-grain control when moulding layers, use the Warp Tool as well, or instead. In the end there will be a lot of layers, so you should name each shape layer and group them into folders so you can keep your workflow manageable. Now, before adding too many layers, add some electrifying effects and depth to the vector layers.

> "Toggle visibility of the Displace filter, under Smart Filters, to reset and reapply the displacement effect"







11 ADD GLOW AND SHADOW EFFECTS

Select a vector shape, like 'Tricep-1'. Click Add Layer Style>Inner Glow. Set the blend mode to Screen at 75% Opacity, and choose a bright cyan (#33d5fe). Set a 4px Softer Edge, hit Ok. Now, click Add Layer Style>Drop Shadow. Set the Opacity to 78%, check 'Use Global Light' and set the direction to about 99° to match the primary light source. Set the Distance to 18px, the Size to 16px. Hit OK. Apply the same effects to each vector shape layer. Hold Opt/Alt and drag the effects from one layer to another to duplicate the effect.

12 REORDER AND MASK THE VECTOR COMPOSITE

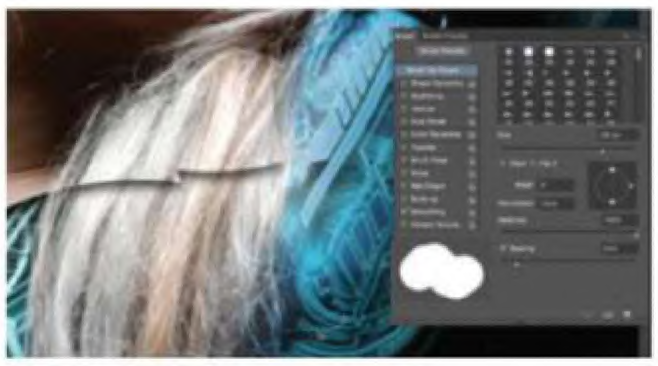
Your shapes will be overlapping and messy in places. Tidy it up by masking out the rough bits and ordering the layers to add depth. Select the vector layer and add a Vector mask. Use the brush tool with a Sharp of 5-10px, 75% Hardness and a round tip, and mask out the messy edges and undesirable elements. This will bring everything together and mask any layers that are covering the straps on the model's outfit.

13 THE PLASTIC SKIN LAYER

For the hands and face where you want lots of detail, create a new version of the model and smooth the skin into an artificial texture. Duplicate the Colorized layer and name it 'Plastic Skin'. Go to Filter>Blur>Surface Blur. Set the Radius to 4px and the Threshold to 50px. Add a Vector Mask and fill with black to mask completely. Add the Inner Glow and Shadow effects as shown in Step 11. Select the Brush with a 4-8px tip, 75% Hardness, and paint in elements you want to keep, leaving gaps to create a segmented effect.

CUT-THROUGH SKIN AND LIGHTING EFFECTS

CREATE CUT-THROUGH SKIN OVERLAY, RENDER ENERGY BEAMS AND LIGHTING



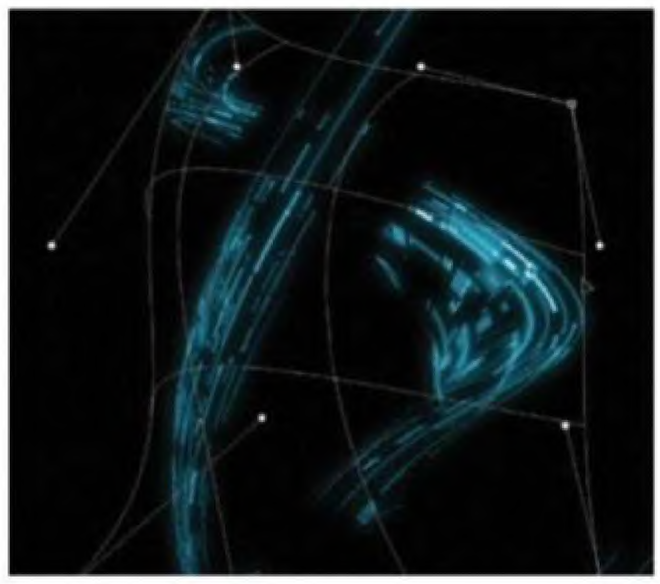
14 CUT-THROUGH SKIN LAYER

Duplicate the Original layer and make this the top layer in the layers palette. Add a Drop Shadow effect with the Opacity set to 80, the Angle at 99°, the Distance set to 5px and the Size set to10px. Add a Vector mask, select the brush with a large tip and 100% Hardness. Mask away elements to expose the underlying the vector shape layers, using sweeping curves from the brush edge. To remove unwanted drop shadow, separate it into a new layer. Go to Layer>Layer Style>Create Layer. Add a Vector mask and mask away unwanted shadows.



15 ENERGY BEAMS

Create a new layer named 'Energy beam'. Click Add Layer Style>Inner Glow. Set the Opacity to 76%, the Colour to #33d5fe, check Edge and set the Size to 8px. Add an Outer Glow with 75% Opacity, 7% Noise, the Colour set to #13CAFF and the Size set to 24px. Create a duplicate layer for each energy beam. Select the Pen tool and draw the path. Grab the brush tool with a 4px tip and 80% Hardness. On the Paths tab Opt/Alt+click the 'Stroke With Brush' icon. On the Stroke Path menu, select Brush, check 'Simulate Pressure' and hit OK.



16 DIGITAL SWIRL

Duplicate a blank 'Energy beam' layer and name it 'Digital Swirl'. Edit the Inner glow and reduce the Size to 3px. Alter the Outer Glow, reduce the Noise to 3% and raise the Edge size to 64px. To create this effect you can use the v4 Mainframe brush set from **http://z-design.deviantart.com**. Use a large brush and several brush types to achieve a complex composition. Select the Warp tool and warp the layer to form the whirling path. Stitch multiple layers together to gain the desired effect. Mask the whirl passing behind the model to add depth.



17 RENDER LIGHT FLARES

Create a new layer and fill with black. Name it 'Flare'. Go to Filter>Render>Lens Flare. Check the desired flare type and brightness. For the first pulse, select Movie Prime and set 65% Brightness. Select the layer and set the blend mode to Linear Dodge. Move the layer so the flare intersects with the digital whirl to give an additive effect. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, hold Opt/Alt and click to attach it to 'Flare' as a clipping mask. Adjust the Hue to match the blue in the digital swirl. Then mask away any unwanted lens flare artefacts.



VECTOR SHAPE RESOURCES

Fantastic free-to-use stock images, vector packs and Photoshop brushes can be found online. These can save a lot of time and hassle involved when creating vector composite shape layers.

BRUSHES:

Z-design: http://z-design.deviantart.com/
IHEA: http://ihea.deviantart.com

VECTOR PACKS:

Designious: http://www.designious.com/
Go Media: https://arsenal.gomedia.us/

18 FINISHING TOUCHES

Outline the edges of the digital swirl with some energy beams. Add a drop shadow to the uppermost beam to add definition. Draw a few sparks by creating a new energy beam layer and applying dots with a 5-15px brush with 0% Hardness. Then fill some of the gaps in your vector composite with a subtle electric glow. Create a new layer and position it above or underneath the vector shapes where needed. Select the brush tool with a 30-40px Size, 50-75% Opacity, 0% Hardness and the Noise checked. Use the colour #42C1D2 and gently brush in a glow.

QUICK TIP

A great way to gain fine-grain control over layer styles is to separate them into layers. To do this, select the layer with an applied effect. Got to Layer>Layer Style>Create Layer. Now you can apply masking and adjustments directly to individual effects.

Flame Painter

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Beautiful gradient transitions
Editable vector layers
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CREATE PRO KEY ART

LEARN HOW TO CREATE AN EPIC VIDEOGAME KEY ART TO CAPTURE YOUR AUDIENCE

The entertainment industry relies on the use of powerful imagery that can touch an audience emotionally, and create memorable campaigns for film or videogame launches. Whether iconic, cryptic or a mixture of both, key art pieces and posters have the sole purpose of making a bold statement to immediately connect with fans across the globe.

Therefore, a good key art is fundamental for a successful campaign, and in some cases, it can determine how well or poorly a franchise will perform. Massive, slick, iconic, epic – these are all words that should be kept in mind when creating key art, artwork that has the universal ability of telling a story in an instant and grabbing the viewer's attention with a single glance.

Over the next few pages you will get an exclusive behind the scenes look at how we created the *Goleador League* key art. This piece is a fantasy soccer-themed mobile game that our studio recently launched for Italian confectionery manufacturer, Perfetti Van Melle.

From the integration of 3D elements with 2D layer compositing, to creating a digital matte painting backdrop, this tutorial will guide you through the steps needed to create a real world videogame key art.





OUR EXPERTS

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Davide Bianca is the founder & Executive Creative Director of Saizen Media, based in both Los Angeles and Milan.

Andrea Mancuso is the lead CG artist at Saizen Media. He has experience in CG film, videogame projects, key art and illustration.

WORK IN PROGRESS
BUILDING A CHARACTER



Progress 1: Initial layering and compositing



Progress 2: Setting up the main composition



Progress 3: Adding details to the character

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT
CINEMATIC COMPOSITION

01 CINEMATIC COMPOSITION
Set-up your work area according to the specifications. Add extra padding space around main elements to allow for cropping. It's useful to set up your layers in groups, keeping characters, environmental elements, adjustment layers and the backdrop separated, to easily readjust if needed. For this tutorial, we will be using a cinematic widescreen, double fold-out format at 300 dpi – a size big enough for posters and magazine inserts.





02 MANAGING CG LAYERS
Import all character CG layers into your composition, stacking the layers in the necessary order. Start with the colour pass and proceed with two copies of occlusion, one normal layer, and a reflections layer. Double click on the first occlusion layer and set its blend mode to Multiply. Repeat the same step for the second copy and set the blend mode to Overlay. Finally, set the reflections layers blend mode to Screen. Adjust the opacity of each layer to achieve the desired look.

> "The world a character lives in is what makes the scene believable, as it provides a sense of context"



03 BLOCKING SHAPES IN
Create basic outlines for the backdrop. Keep in mind that the main focus is on the character. However, the world a character lives in is what makes the scene believable, as it provides a sense context and location for the events being depicted. Loosely block in basic shapes and colours for the snowy mountains, skyline and foreground. Keep the colours and shapes interesting, forcing the eye into the distance and conveying a sense of grand scale. You will use these shapes as guides for detailing and texturing by integrating photographic assets.

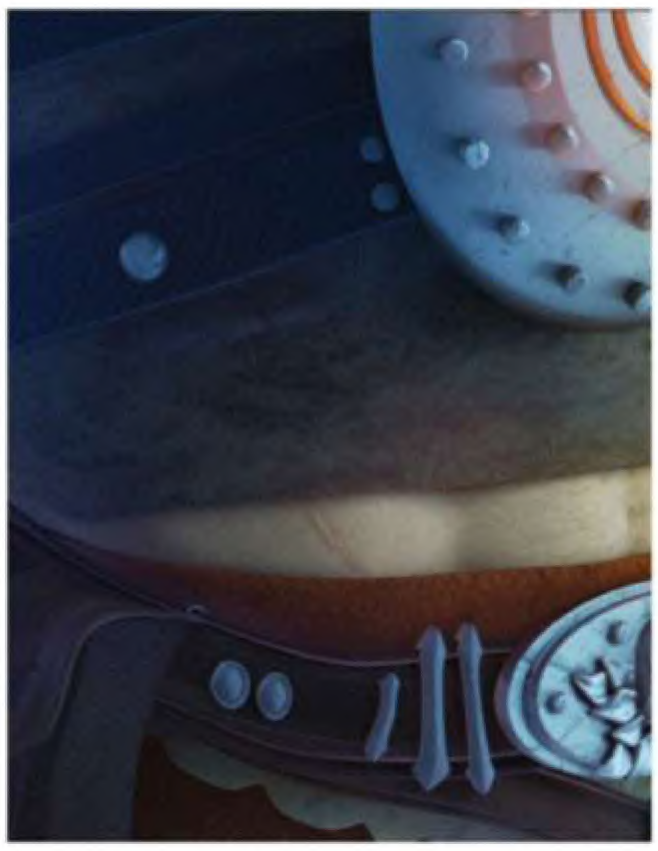


04 ADDING RIM LIGHTS
Use the normal CG layer as an illumination layer. Desaturate it by selecting Hue/Saturation from the adjustment menu. Next, with the layer still selected, press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert it. Select Gamma Curves (Cmd/Ctrl+M), and adjust the curve until you get a black image with a glow around the border. Go to Color Balance (Cmd/Ctrl+B) and tint the layer with Cyan and Blue. Then double click on the layer and set the blend mode to Screen. This will create a blue rim around your character to simulate the moonlight. Use the Eraser tool to eliminate areas that aren't lit.



05 CREATING BELIEVABLE SKIN

Rendering believable skin is tedious, but it makes a huge difference. Custom texture maps are generally created for the 3D model, however, you will want to add more detail to the renders by including elements like bruises, scars and imperfections to make the character realistic. Place battle scars or wounds on the character in areas not protected by the armour, this will help create a visual narrative. Paint in extra pores and veins in certain areas, and don't be afraid to experiment with bouncing lights and translucency to simulate sub-surface scattering or wet surfaces.



06 TELL THE STORY WITH CLOTHING

The same principles used for believable skin rendering also apply to clothes – remember that we are telling a story through a single image, so we want to convey as much narrative detail as possible. A Viking warrior wears hand-made animal leather clothes – a compromise between warmth and tactical practicality during battle. Add details of blood stains, dirt and wear and tear, to enhance the look of the fabric. Small rips and holes in the cape or trousers will serve as a reminder of past battles.



07 BUILD HEAVY METAL

A Viking helm is one of the most iconic battle props. Its unique shape and curled horns are immediately recognisable, and convey a sense of strength. The eye will naturally be drawn to the helm, so make this the main focal point of your piece. Work with the Dodge and Burn tools to create the roughness of a hammered metal sheet. Apply heavy scratches by combining brush strokes with photographic assets. Follow the shape of the helm, keeping in mind your light sources and how light bounces off curved surfaces.

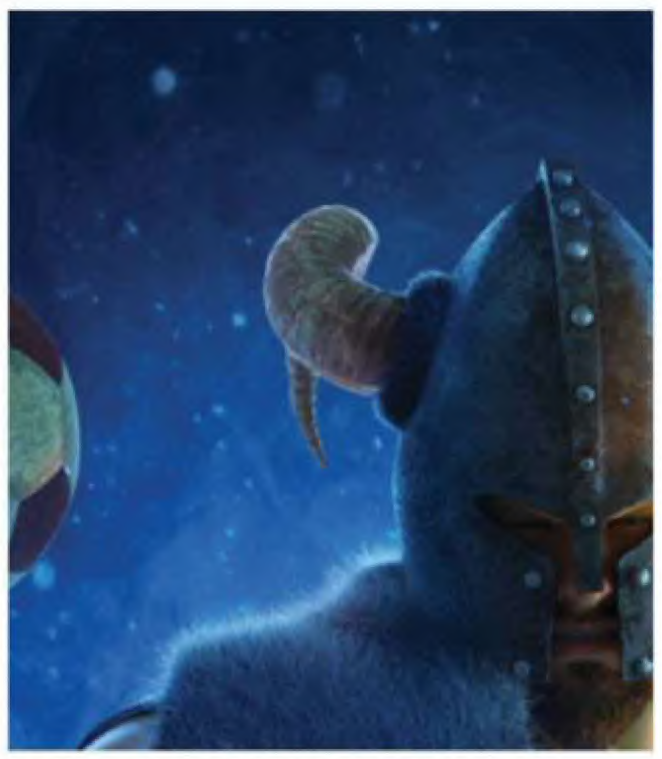
QUICK TIP

When working with complex lighting, constant fine-tuning is necessary. Always use editable adjustment layers instead of non-reversible actions. You can apply adjustment layers to a single layer, or to a group of layers, by placing them directly above the target layer or group, and using the Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G command.



08 CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT

At this stage, break away from your character and focus on the environment that he lives in. Start by choosing a colour palette that makes sense, with the tone and mood setting the scene that you are depicting. Fill in the areas that you outlined previously with more defined brush strokes to simulate the moonlight bouncing off the snow and casting shadows. Use photographic assets both as a reference and as textures to obtain a proper realistic finish. Use the Dodge and Burn tools to darken poorly lit areas or to reflect more light.



09 ADD ATMOSPHERIC ELEMENTS

Everything looks more epic with fog and mist. There are plenty of ways to create great particle effects. For this key art, our team used the particle engine in Arnold to create thin layers of dynamic rolling smoke, combined with hand painted thicker layers in the foreground. Place the smoke layers at the top of your layer stack and set their blend modes to Screen. You will want to keep the opacity quite low. With a large soft brush erase the areas further away from light sources.

10 | ALTER THE DEPTH OF FIELD

Our brain processes imagery based on colour, shapes and depth. So push the depth of your image as far as possible in order to make it pop. Duplicate your character group and merge its content – keep the original group disabled as a backup. Using the Blur tool, begin softening the contours. Use a small brush with low strength. Next increase the strength and blur the areas further away, while keeping the rest sharp. This will direct the viewer's eye to the focal points, simulating the cinematic depth of field of a 50mm lens.



11 | MAGIC PARTICLES

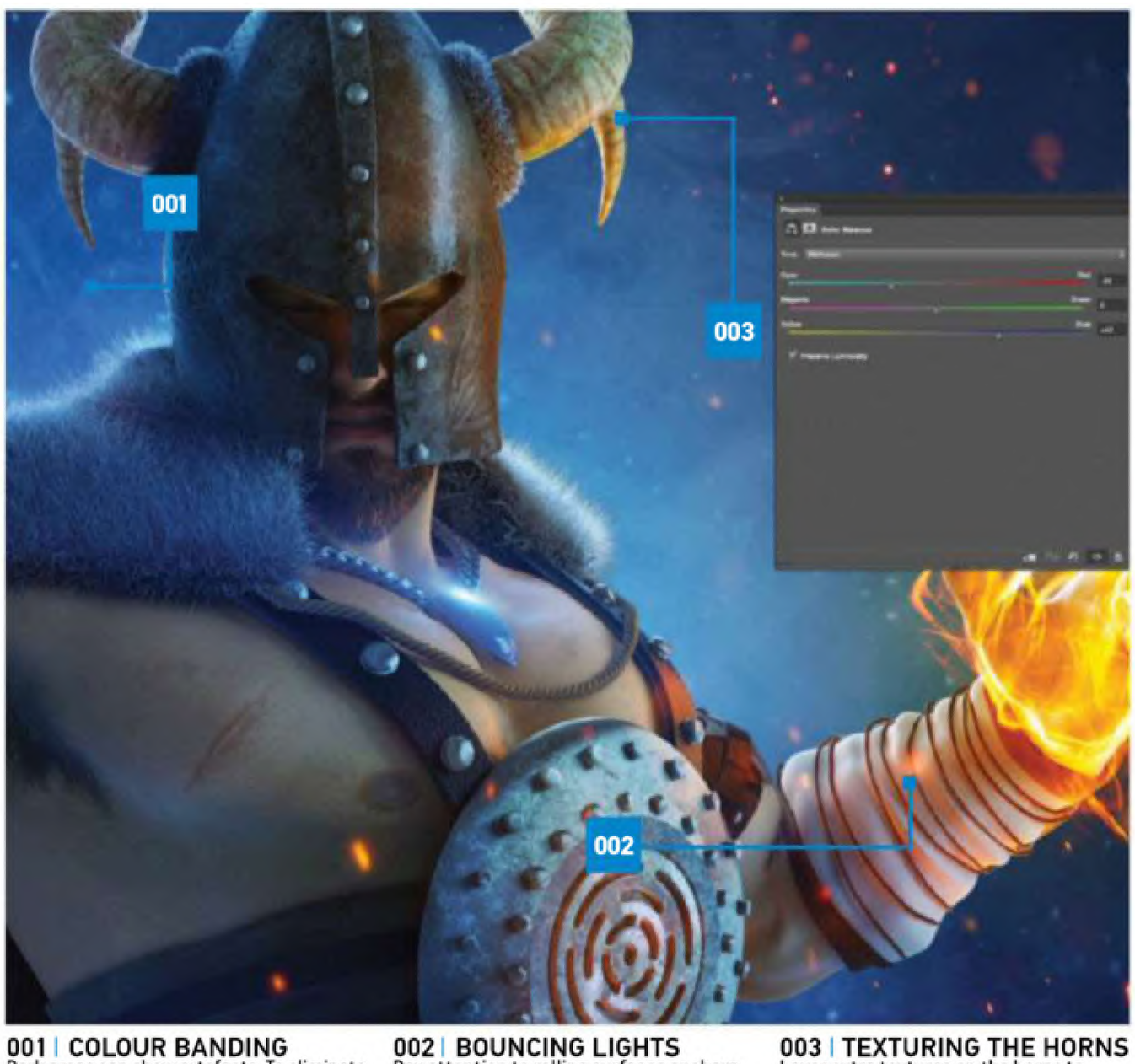
This is a fantasy game, so your character will, of course, have supernatural abilities. Use a particle system as secondary focal point to counter-balance elements and guide the viewer's eye across the piece. Use warm colours to contrast the cool tints of the environment. Start with an orange tint and begin outlining your magical flares. Switch to lighter tints in correspondence with heat sources. Keep shapes dynamic and interesting. Integrate a soft layer of smoke and an Overlay orange glow layer to add realism and make the colours really pop.



12 | BALANCING

Create a new group containing adjustment layers for Gamma Curves, Brightness/Contrast, and Colour Balance, and place them at the top of your composite. These will serve as master colour correction settings. Adjust the Gamma Curves until the image looks properly lit. Gamma Curves are also helpful to remove possible artifacts resulting from Screen layers and compositing. Use Brightness/Contrast to bring out highlights, and use the Colour Balance settings to increase Cyan and Blue on both highlights and mid tones, as this will help blend elements seamlessly and unify tints.





001 | COLOUR BANDING
Dark areas can show artefacts. To eliminate noticeable colour-banding, apply a 0.8 Uniform Noise to the Screen layer

002 | BOUNCING LIGHTS
Pay attention to rolling surfaces or sharp edges, and add extra highlights or rim lights to increase realism

003 | TEXTURING THE HORNS
Layer extra textures on the horns to convey a sense of an ancient and mythological animal

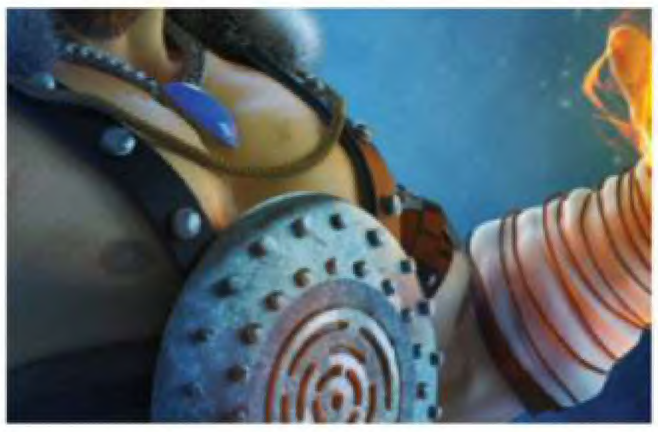
13 | PUSHING IT FURTHER

Use three separate planes of interest to further increase the depth of the environment. Keep the foreground elements sharp and bright, the midground elements softly blurred and mildly lit, and elements in the far distance heavily blurred and dark. The reduced readability of far away elements, such as the faraway mountain tops or rock formations, will serve as hinted reading values – the viewer's brain will complete the missing portions by filling in the blanks. This allows us to get away with minimal colour variation while obtaining a very rich and full effect.



14 | ADD DRAMA (SKY AND CLOUDS)

A dark sky will set the mood and drive the eye into the distance. You will want to create clouds that form interesting shapes, low enough on the horizon to create enough contrast to allow for easily readable mountain tops. Use a large soft brush to paint black on top of areas to simulate rarefaction of the atmosphere and the light bouncing off. Ensure the clouds and foreground fog don't clash.



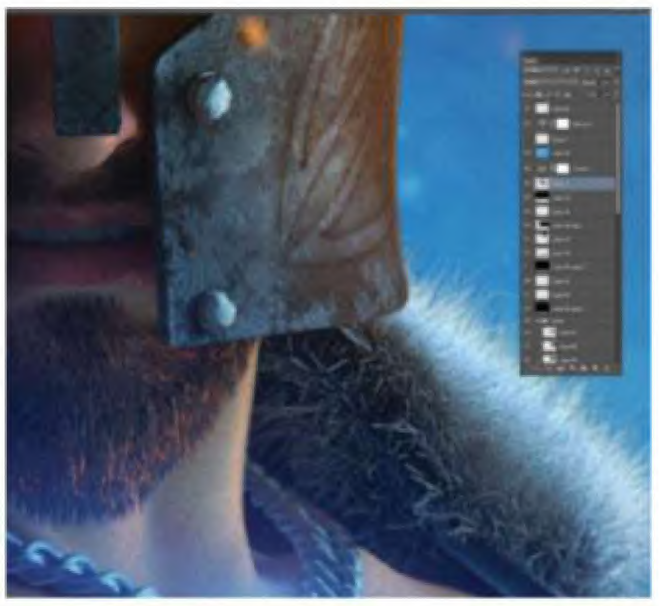
15 ALTERNATING SHADERS

Just like colours and tints, materials and shaders work best together when they create visual rhythm. Pay special attention to creating interesting, alternating patterns of smooth and rough textures. For example, a glossy metal bolt will look more interesting if placed over a rough leather patch. Next add rust and scratches to the chest metal plate. Then using a 1pt brush, paint fuzzy areas around the edges of the abdominal band fabric, sampling the proper shades. This will create a more realistic material and convey a sense of wear and tear.



16 HIGHLIGHTS AND LENS FLARES

Create a new layer at the top of your character group and set its blend mode to Overlay. Using a soft brush, paint white hot spots over the areas that receive specular light – this will help to brighten those areas. Pay special attention to edges and corners directly in the trajectory of light as these areas should reflect more light. For extra realism, consider integrating photographic assets of (anamorphic) lens flares by appropriately sizing them, adjusting their tints, and setting them in Screen mode over the area of interest.



17 SHARPENING DETAILS

Using the Sharpen tool set to 50% strength, start applying firm strokes over the character's beard, eyes and lips. Proceed gently, making sure that the sharpening process does not damage the image or cause any pixelation. The main goal here is to increase immediate readability in emotionally relevant areas. Repeat the same process on portions of the skin or steel plates that you want to guide the viewer to.

18 USING SOFT GRADIENTS

Create a new layer and place it at the top of your background group. Using a large soft circular brush, start painting black over the far bottom edges of the environment. Try following the curves of the rock formations to naturally cast shadows. Using soft gradients will add an extra level of dimensionality to your backdrop, simulating natural light and shadow casting. Set the layer to Overlay and adjust the Opacity accordingly. Repeat the same process on the lower portion of the character.



QUICK TIP

When working on high-resolution images for print, you will be constantly zooming in and out of your canvas and will want to watch out for artefacts, pixelation and aliasing. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+0 to toggle back to the images actual pixel size and ensure your artwork is crisp.



19 FIRE EMBERS

Create a layer on top of your composition and using a 2pt brush, paint light orange dots. Double click on the layer to access its properties and select the Outer Glow option. Then choose a red tint and adjust the Radius and Choke. Now using the Smudge tool with a 5pt brush, apply strokes on one side of the ember particle pulling away from it. This will create a trail or path, giving a sense of motion. Repeat this step as needed. You can also blur specific ember layers to simulate distance from the camera.



20 FINAL TOUCHES

At this point you will make the final tweaks and corrections, fine-tune your Colour Correction settings by accessing the adjustment layers, and export a final raster image. Always make sure your colour profile and document settings match the required output formats. Keep in mind that typically, due to the natural ink absorption process on paper, there is a 10% Luminosity drop from screen to print. So if you are delivering ready-to-print files, make sure to save a print-specific variant with an additional 10% punch in Gamma Curves.



CREATE UNIQUE BRUSHES WITH ADOBE BRUSH

PAINT AN EPIC LANDSCAPE USING YOUR OWN CUSTOM BRUSHES, CAPTURED THROUGH THE CC APP, ADOBE BRUSH

Photoshop CC comes complete with a great selection of brushes, from traditional paint bristles to charcoal and airbrushes, but there's nothing quite like creating your own unique set to give your work that personal touch. In the past you would do this using Photoshop's built-in brush editor, but with the recent release of the Adobe Brush app for iOS devices, it's now possible to take photographs on the go with your iPhone or iPad and upload them instantly onto the cloud to use at home. Real paint marks, scribbles on paper, toy cars, that pile of socks which never seems to diminish; you can make brushes out of anything you find around the house and pull them straight into Photoshop to play around with.

In this tutorial you will learn how to create brushes using Adobe Brush, import them into Photoshop CC and paint an epic, colourful landscape from scratch. The only things you require are an iOS device, Photoshop CC, an internet connection and some imagination. It's going to be a fun one so grab a cup of tea and let's get started!



OUR EXPERT

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@abigbat

Paul is the art director at Scottish indie game studio Blazing Griffin, and a freelance illustrator. He likes dinosaurs and weightlifting.

SOURCE FILES

Don't have CC to make and use your own Adobe Brush tools? Grab the brushes created for this tutorial from FileSilo!

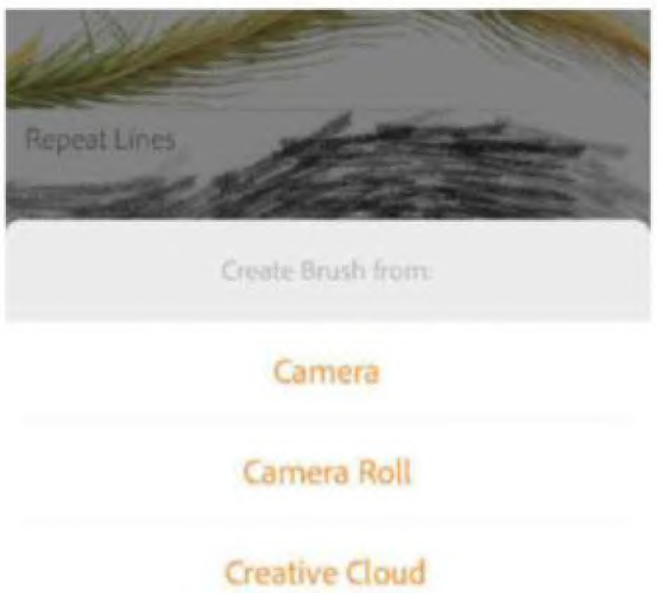
START WITH A SCRIBBLE

MAKE AND CAPTURE YOUR BRUSHES IN ADOBE BRUSH

01 MAKE SOME MARKS

Adobe Brush allows you to create brushes out of anything, so it's worth spending some time finding different materials and experimenting. For this image, let's keep it simple. Grab some nice pens and pencils and make some marks on paper. Don't worry about being neat – you can tweak these marks later.





02 IMPORT YOUR DOODLES

Open the Adobe Brush app and click the plus button. Choose Camera and take a photo of one of your brush marks. You'll notice that you can now see your brush at the top of the screen – this is a preview window and will allow you to get a feel for how it'll look when drawn in Photoshop. Hit Next.

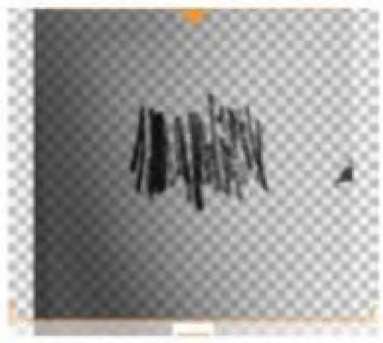


03 CROP AND REFINE

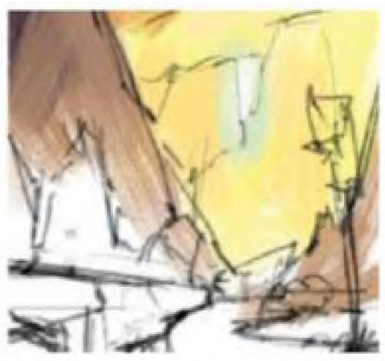
This screen allows you to clean up the photograph that you have taken. Follow the instructions to crop the brush, and then play with the slider in Refine to remove any background that you don't want. Ideally, the brush should sit happily on a transparent background, but you can refine this further in Photoshop.

WORK IN PROGRESS

TURNING SCRIBBLES INTO ART



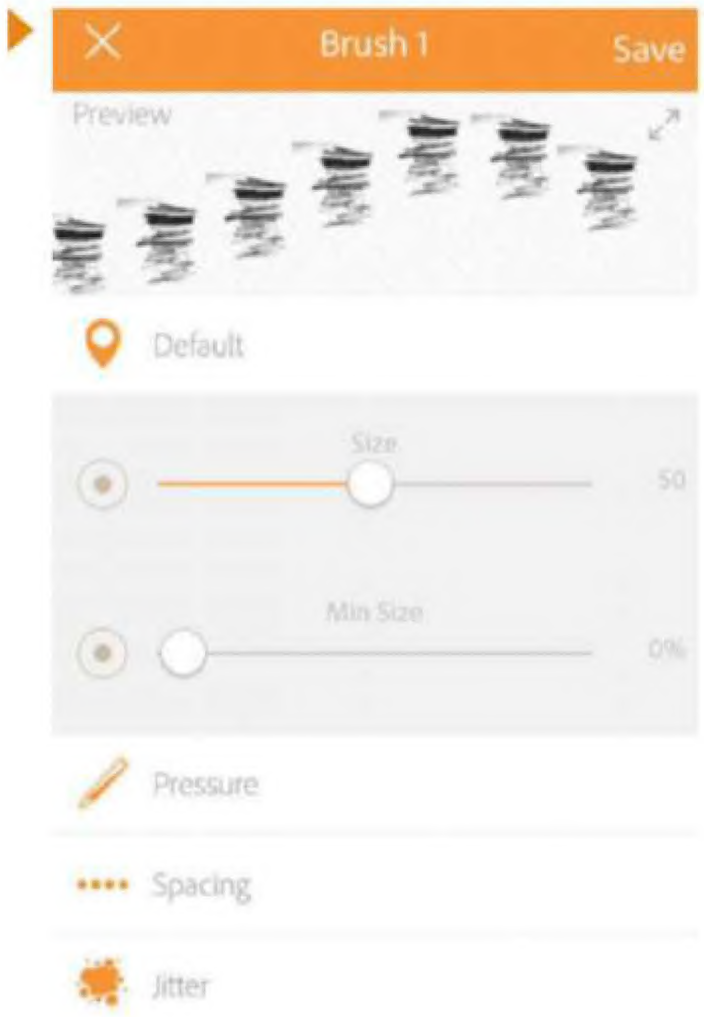
Progress 1: Import your chosen photograph



Progress 2: Start sketching



Progress 3: Finishing touches

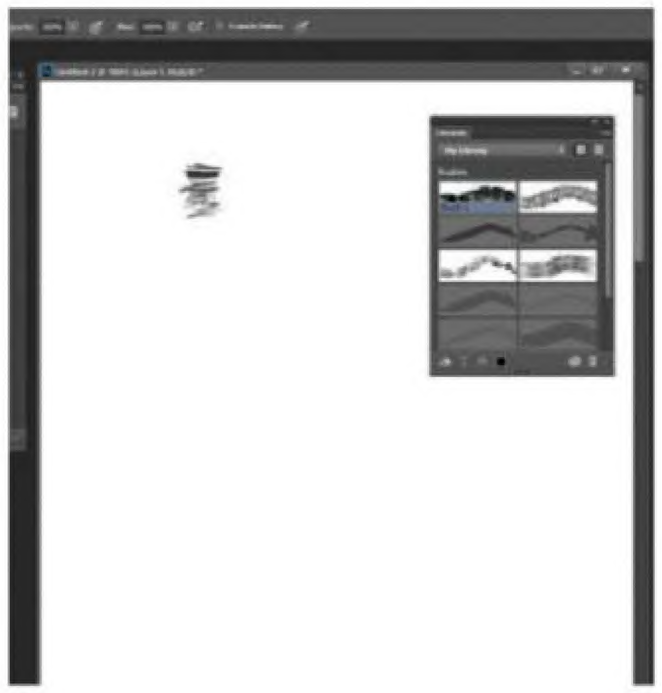


04 PLAY WITH SETTINGS

Now this is the fun part. Here you can tweak various settings to define how the brush acts when drawn in Photoshop. Keep an eye on the preview window, and play with the pressure and spacing settings. For a good starting brush, set the Pressure to Flow, the Spacing to 15% and the Scatter to 30%. You can also add some jitter to the stroke to make it even more random, but make sure you keep it subtle (around 20%). When you are finished, hit Save to immediately save your new brush to the Cloud.

05 IMPORT YOUR BRUSH

Open Photoshop CC. Open the Window tab and select Libraries. You will now see a new tab on-screen which links directly to your CC Library – any brushes you have created and saved in the Adobe Brush app will be available here. To get started, select your new friend in the library window and it'll be selected as your current brush. Open a new Photoshop document (Cmd/Ctrl+N), give it a scribble and see what it looks like in practice.



QUICK TIP

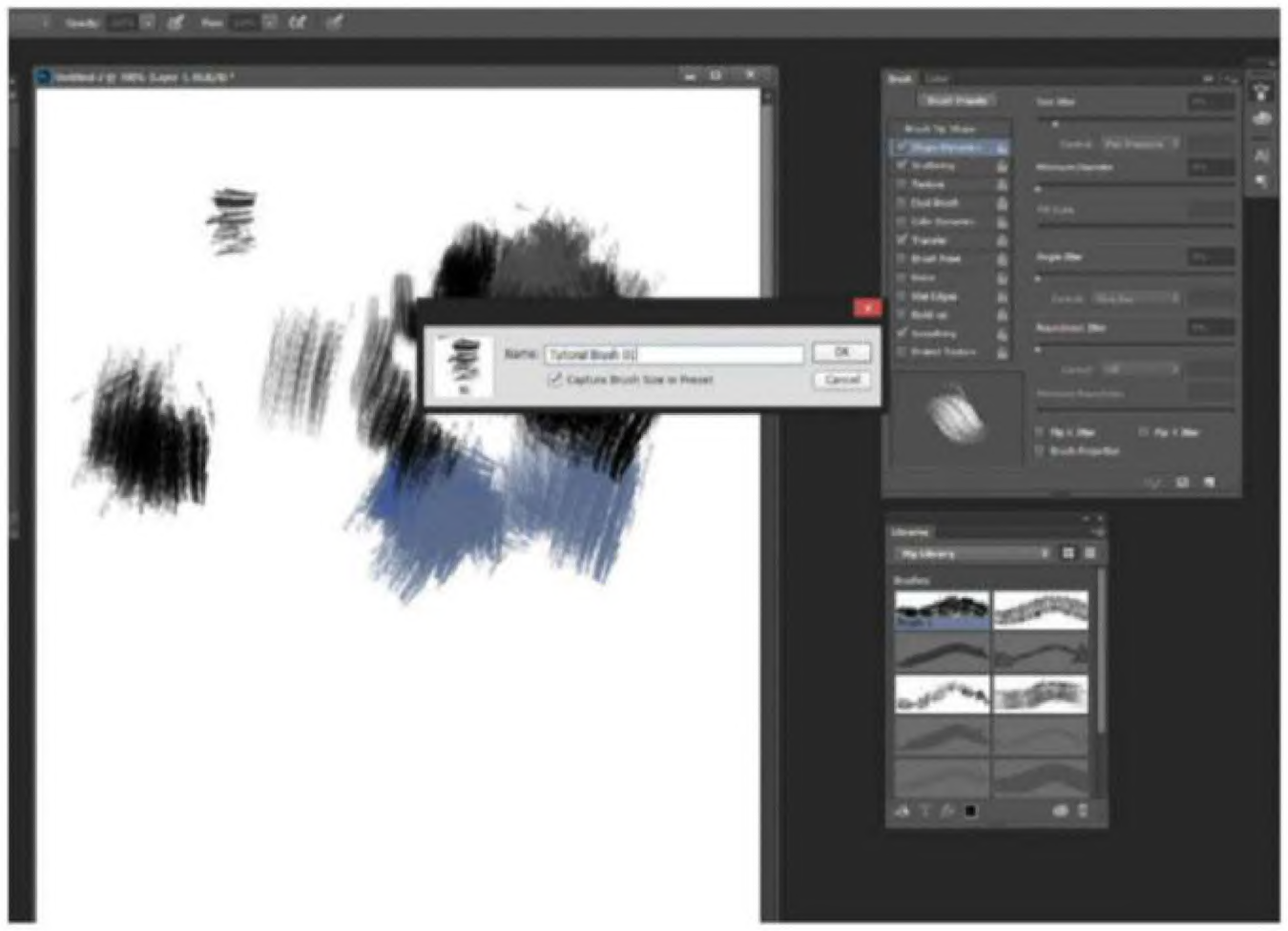
You can really go to town on the sort of textures you import using Adobe Brush. Don't be constrained by pencils and pens. Try photographing a ball of scrunched-up paper, your cat's hair, a dinosaur toy or a strip of tree bark.

06 EDIT AND SAVE

Now that your brush is selected, you can edit it further in Photoshop. Click on Window again and open the Brush panel. From here, you can edit any aspect of the brush, from how heavily it applies to the canvas to how scattered the strokes are. Go through each section and mess with the sliders and buttons, regularly testing it out by scribbling on the canvas. Once you are happy, click the 'Create New Brush' button at the bottom right of the panel and it'll be added to your library!

07 BRUSH EXAMPLES

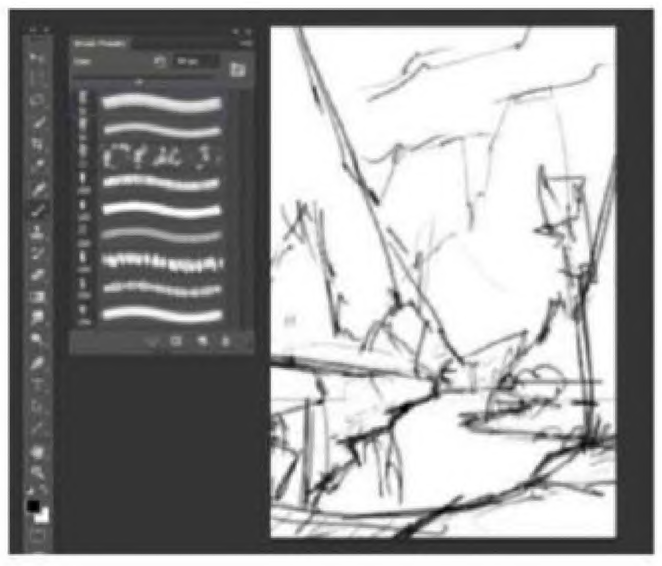
Here are some examples of the brushes that I created for this tutorial. You'll notice that by tweaking the settings in the brush panel, you can end up with extremely varied results. In fact, three of the brushes used here have come from the same scribble. Every time you save a new brush it'll be added to the Brush Presets panel, accessible through the Window tab. You can leave this open while you work to quickly change brushes, or alternatively Cmd/Ctrl+right-click on the canvas.





08 SKETCH YOUR IMAGE

Choose a brush that works nicely at a smaller size and create a new layer for the sketch. You can use reference for this, it'll help you to understand how the real world works and add another level of realism to your painting. Try to create a dynamic composition – something that leads the viewer's eyes into the image and holds them there. Look at some master painters and see how they construct their images for inspiration! Every time you study a master painting you will learn something new about composition or colour application.

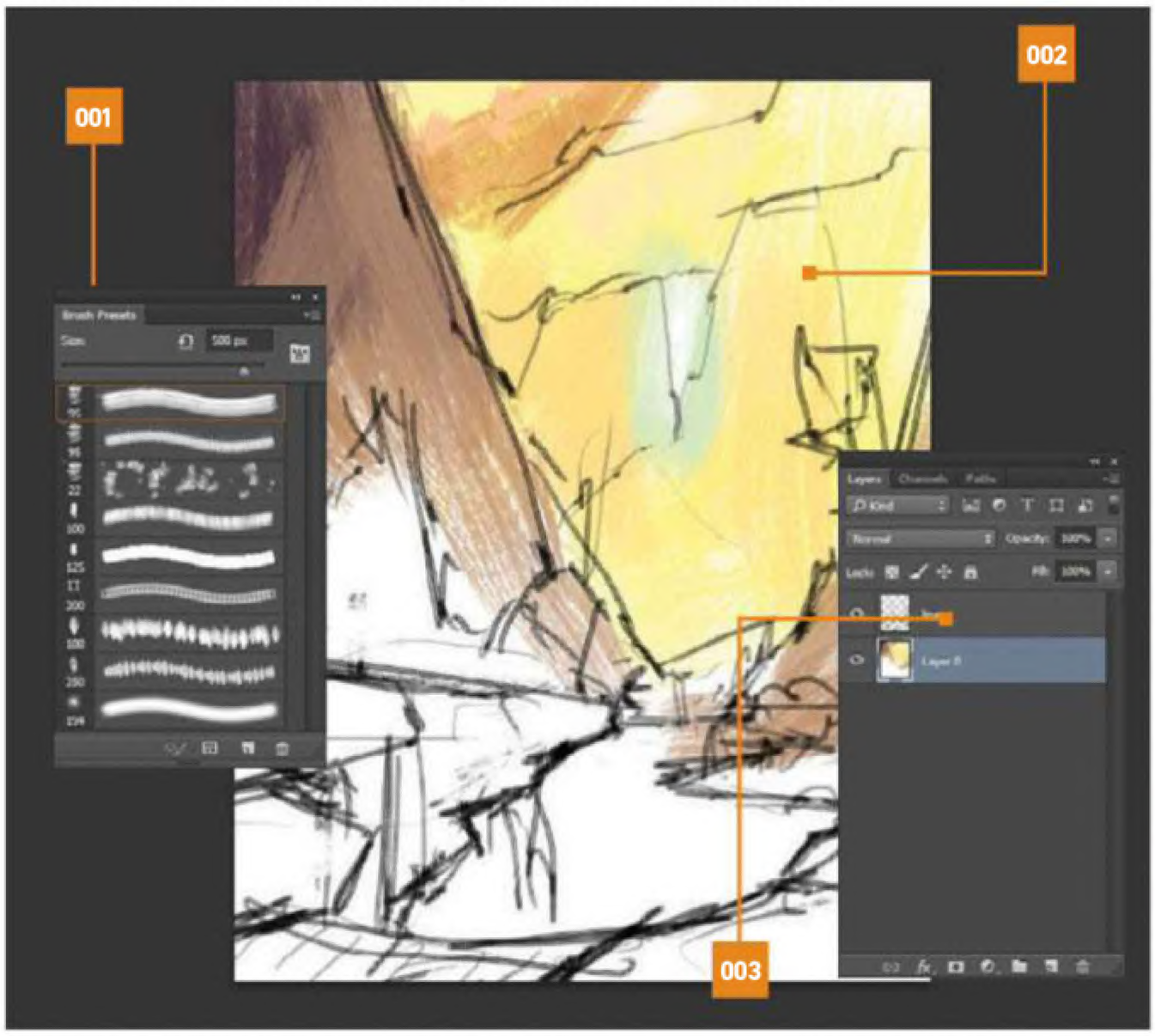


USE YOUR BRUSHES IN PHOTOSHOP

GRAB YOUR BRUSHES AND START PAINTING

09 START PAINTING

With the line art complete, set the layer to Multiply. This allows the dark lines to show over any paint beneath them. You can lock this by clicking the padlock icon, so you don't accidentally draw on this layer. Create a new layer below the line art and paint using a large brush. Focus on the overall shapes and colours – don't worry about details. It's helpful to zoom your canvas out to around 16.7%.



001 | CHOOSE YOUR BRUSH
This first brush works nicely for blocking in colours. Use the slider or square brackets to edit the size.

002 | BE BOLD!
Choose a bright, bold palette to really make your painting unique and stand out from the crowd.

003 | LINE ART LAYER
Later in the image we won't need the line art layer anymore and can simply switch it off.



11 ROCK SHOW

With the sky loosely defined, it's time to start working into the mountains. The Lasso tool is useful here. Draw a rock-style shape and paint into the selection with a textured brush. Using this technique you can separate the different rocks easily. Just invert the selection with Cmd/Ctrl+I, choose a pale sky tone and gently paint in some atmosphere using your soft brush set to a low Opacity. This will help your rocks pop out from each other and appear more three-dimensional.



12 REFINEMENTS

Continue working around the canvas, touching up any areas that need refinement. This is a very organic process, so work on a single area until you get bored or are happy with it, and then jump to something else. The foreground is typically a selling point as it can lead the viewer in to the scene – find some photographs of waterfalls online and use them as reference. The Smudge tool is extremely useful when painting water. Block out the overall forms and then smudge them in the right direction!



10 THE SKY

Once you have your entire canvas blocked in, you can start refining individual sections. The sky is often the most important part of your painting, as it sets the mood and colour for the entire piece, as well as the light source. Study some cloud photographs and paint in some rough cloud shapes using a big brush. Treat clouds as chunky 3D shapes and let them interact with the environment, passing behind and in front of the mountains.

> "Try to create a dynamic composition – something which leads the viewer's eyes into the image"



13 SMUDGE THOSE CLOUDS

To make these clouds feel 3D, consider the light source and shade them as you would a rock or a character – the upper sections are hit by blue from the sky, while the shadows are a warm orange. It is common to use blueish grey in shadows, however, in this case it would darken the image too much. As the sun is behind the clouds, paint in a bright yellow rim light. Again, try to find reference if you can as it's easy to overdo this effect!

DEVELOP THE PAINTING

TRANSFORM YOUR IMAGE FROM A COLOURED SKETCH TO A NARRATIVE MASTERPIECE



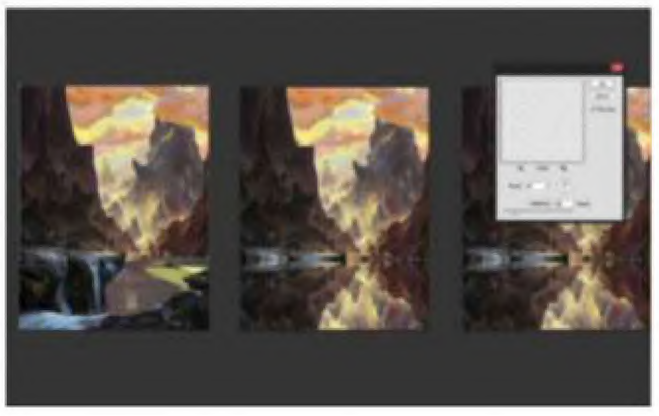
14 TELL A STORY

At this stage, most of the painting is blocked out and working well. What's missing is a narrative. A nice way to figure out if your painting is working is to see if you can name it at this stage. Right now we have a "big spire with pretty lighting", which isn't very inspiring. Find an element in your painting that could be a defining feature and try to improve it. Creating a tusk-like protrusion from the rock inspired me to introduce more toothy rocks, and so Tusk Mountain was born.



15 RUN WITH IT

Take the element you chose to theme the environment on, in this case sharp, toothy rocks, and introduce it into the rest of the painting. This will give it continuity and make it feel more like a real world. Always keep your lighting in mind. The sun is behind the mountain on the left so this area will be fairly dark. It would, however, be shining through and hitting the beach on the right, so let's highlight that. The contrast means that this is the ideal place to add characters later!



16 PAINT REFLECTIONS

There are many ways to paint water and reflections, but this technique is a quick way to get good (if not always realistic) results. Draw a selection box around everything above the horizon. Copy everything within the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+C) and paste it onto a new layer (Cmd/Ctrl+V). Use the Transform tool (Cmd/Ctrl+T) to flip your reflection layer vertically, aligning it below the horizon. Erase any areas not covered in water, or better yet, use the Quick Mask tool to paint them out!

17 TAKE A BREAK

With the reflection positioned correctly, this is a good time to take a break from the image – have some food or go for a walk for an hour. When you return you'll notice lots of areas that could do with some extra attention. Paint in the waterfalls to make sure that they interact with the water. Go around the shore and paint in the small reflections, which the Transform method misses, as well as small details such as ripples on the surface.



18 FINISHING TOUCHES

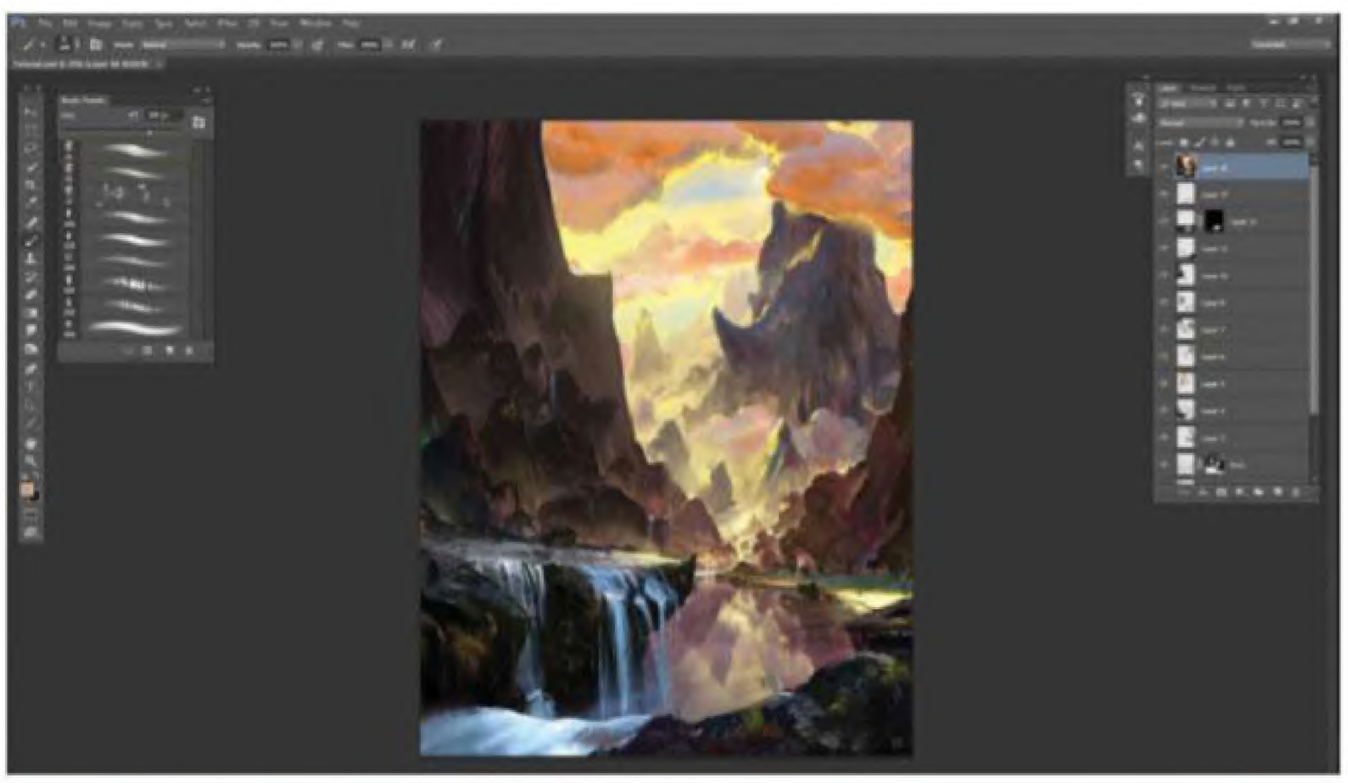
The final stage of any painting involves flattening it and playing with adjustment layers to bring the whole thing together. Adjust the Levels of the image first (Cmd/Ctrl+L). You want the sky to really pop out from the mountain, so raise the highlights a little with the right slider. Increase the Saturation (Cmd/Ctrl+U) by +10. Finally, use the Dodge tool set to Highlight and 30% Exposure to paint in any additional highlights or lighten areas that are too dark. Adjust until you're happy with how it looks.



THE MAGIC OF MASKS

As mentioned in Step 16, the Quick Mask tool is generally more useful than the Eraser, and is very simple to use once you get the hang of it. Erasing is permanent, whereas masks allow you to paint details in or out at any time, and generally give you more control.

To use a mask, click the 'Add Layer Mask' button in the layer panel. This creates a small white image of your canvas next to the layer name. When this is selected you can only paint in black or white – painting in black acts as an Eraser, painting in white brings information back.



QUICK TIP

You can use your newly created brushes for more than just drawing or painting. The Eraser, Smudge and Dodge/Burn tools can all be pulled from the Cloud Library too! Experiment with different brushes to give your smudges a rougher edge or your dodges a little more randomization.

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CONTROL COLOUR WITH CLIPPING MASKS

LEARN HOW TO TAKE CONTROL OF MANGA-STYLE LINE ART AND COLOUR BY USING CLIPPING MASKS TO ENHANCE PRECISION



Manga is an action-packed genre with a distinctive visual style. This style, characterised by clean, weighted line art and precision colouring, can be tough to carry off when you're painting digitally, as it requires a lot of control. That's where Photoshop comes in. Clipping masks can be used to create precise colour and line placement, as they clip to the layer below. This is ideal when you're working with a manga subject that will have a clean, cel-shaded look, as it means that you can draw and paint freely without worrying about having to clean up colour artefacts later. And if you decide to shift your composition around, the clipping masks will move with the layers they're clipped to, making for less layer-by-layer editing if you make significant changes to the placement of focal points.

It's easy to fall into a workflow routine when you're drawing and painting manga: line art, flats, colour overlays, shading and highlights. This is an efficient way to draw and colour if you're producing sequential art, but you can get stuck in a rut. Working with clipping masks allows you to break out of your routine and experiment with additional layers, effects and coloured line art, so you can push the boundaries of your style and still edit non-destructively.



OUR EXPERT

REBEKKA HEARL
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Rebekka Hearl is the designer of *Advanced Photoshop*, an aspiring illustrator, and rhythm game enthusiast. She loves Photoshop, working on her own creative projects, and Rise Against.

START FROM A SKETCH

WORK UP YOUR THUMBNAILS INTO FULL LINE ART AND COLOUR FLATS





01 PREPARE THUMBNAILS

Start by working up a loose character design and some thumbnails. Producing a couple of thumbnails before you get started means that you can develop the strongest composition. In this case, we've created a straight-on character design thumbnail plus two possibilities for the composition, and selected the second composition thumbnail as the strongest option.

02 WORK UP THE SKETCH

Now we finish working up the sketch. We fixed the character's expression and added the background scene of the monster and city. You should consider at this point where you will place them and how much light you'll give them, to ensure they won't distract the viewer from the main subject. Because we're working with individual layers and masks we have the freedom to move the monster around at a later point.

03 LINE ART

Take your time with this part – strong line art is key to this style. Zoom in close to get the details right, but zoom out often to see if it's working. Use a hard brush for lines, and a hard eraser to taper the line into the exact shape you want. Remember the basics: curves for soft objects, straight lines for hard objects; thick lines for heavy objects, thin lines for light objects.



WORK IN PROGRESS

MANGA-STYLE MASKS



Progress 1: Work up the sketch



Progress 2: The first clipping mask



Progress 3: Enhance with textures



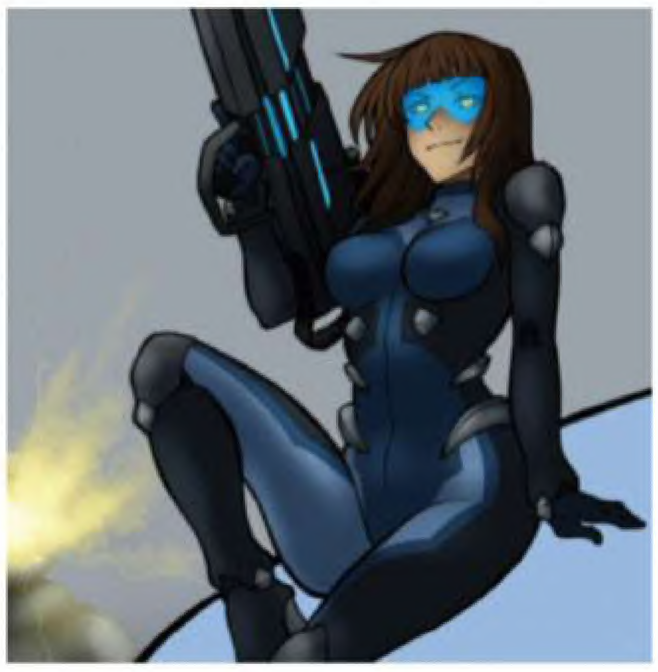
04 BLOCK IN VALUES

We want to make sure we get the light direction in this piece just right, so before we start on the flat colours, quickly sketch up a values layer in greyscale. We want to draw attention to the subject's face more than anything, and this process helps us to map out the areas that we should avoid lighting so as not to distract the viewer. This has also helped to determine that the monster is going to be too close to the subject, so we will move it away later on.



05 FIRST COLOUR FLATS

Have some fun designing the colours for the subject's suit. We want it to suit the character design without distracting from her face. Also, block in the monster and city. Go ahead and add in the shades and power beam since this is the main source of light in this piece. This will help greatly when we start shading the subject. The background is all looking rather hideous at this point, but it's just a sketch so it doesn't matter! No need to be overly critical of your work this early on.



06 THE FIRST CLIPPING MASK

Start working out the subject's midtones. This is where we use our first clipping mask. New layer>right click>Create clipping mask. This is like Preserve Transparency, but on a separate layer. Clipping masks ensure you have greater control; you can also create multiple clipping masks and use them to compare different effects. Fill this new clipping mask layer with a dark, desaturated blue, and change the blend mode to Multiply. Lower the opacity to midtone level, and use a soft brush to erase areas that will be well lit. Map in basic lighting – nothing detailed at this point.

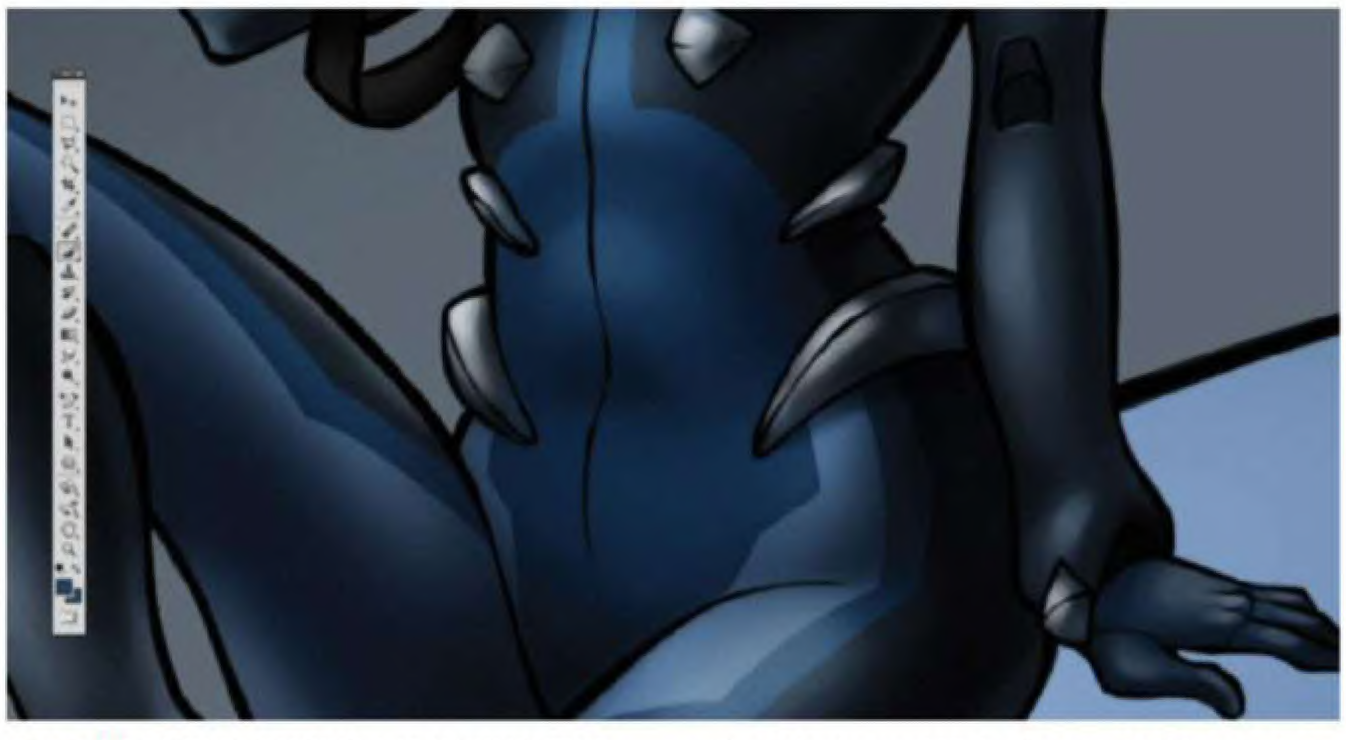


07 SHADE AND HIGHLIGHT CLIPPING MASKS

Start shading the face and hair. We want to go for a soft cel-shaded style – like anime, but still painterly. Make two new clipping masks for soft lighting and shading (set to Screen and Multiply respectively), and two more for painting shades and highlights (again, one set to Screen and one to Multiply). The face is the only skin tone in this piece, which will ensure that it will be a main focus. Shade both the face and hair with warm brown and highlight with yellows – this will contrast nicely with the overall blue composition.

QUICK TIP

Colouring in flat colours can be a systematic and tedious chore. To speed up the process, do the following: group the line art, copy it, flatten it, and hit Image>Adjustments>Threshold. This will harden your lines. Set this layer to Multiply, create a new layer underneath it and start to colour a section of the subject. Be as sloppy as you like. Then take the Magic Wand tool, select the threshold line art layer, and select outside the section you just coloured. Use Select>Modify>Expand/Contract to adjust the selection as you need to. Go back to the colour layer with the selection intact, and hit Delete. Quick and easy flats!



08 CONTINUE SHADING AND HIGHLIGHTING

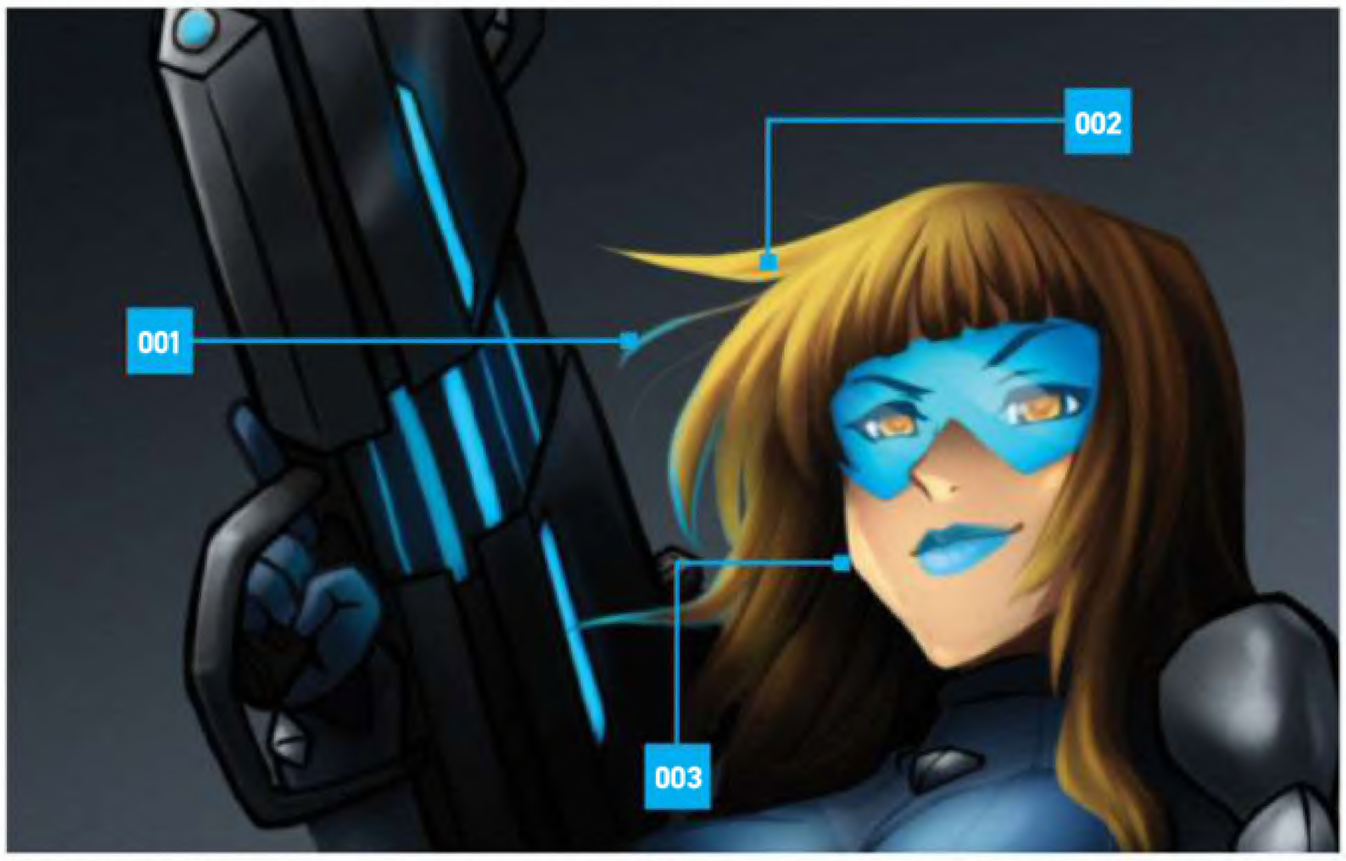
Use the same technique to shade the body. Use soft, curved shading on the body to emphasise the form and harder shading on the metals to give them a metallic sheen. Consider backlighting and refracted colour: add light, desaturated blues to the sides of the character's body that are facing away from the light source (the beam), and add blue to the sections of the metals that are nearest her suit. Repeat this process for the gun as well.

CONTROL CLIPPING MASKS

USE CLIPPING MASKS TO ENHANCE SHADING, HIGHLIGHTS AND TEXTURE

09 | COLOUR THE LINE ART

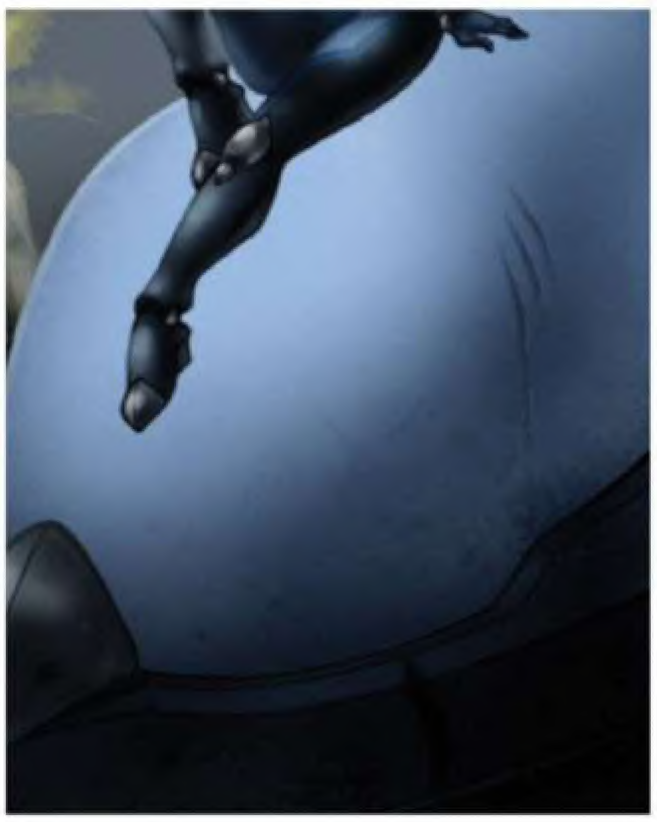
Start colouring the lines. When colouring the lines of the face, keep them skin-coloured. The hair is nearer to the light source, so paint over the brown lines with a stark yellow. Create another clipping mask in the colour group and paint yellow into her hair. Started planning the glowing blue on the gun – paint blue into the lines once the yellow is done. Don't be afraid to erase or work over the lines where they don't look right, especially those nearest the light source.



001 | BOUNCE LIGHT
The hair nearest to the gun will reflect the blue light from it, so paint this over on its own clipping mask to add a realistic highlight.

002 | LIGHT SOURCE
The hair nearest to the main light source in the image is a lighter colour as it reflects light. Paint this on its own clipping mask.

003 | COLOURED LINE ART
The areas of the face nearest these two areas of lighting will also be lighter. Colour this on its own clipping mask over the line art.



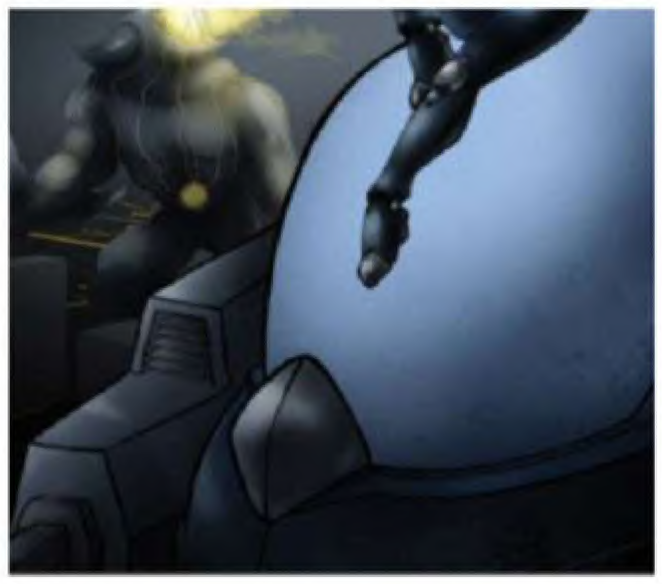
11 | ADD DAMAGE

Make that mecha look like it's been in the wars. Batter it! Add textures and paint in some damage to make the mecha look like it's fought its fair share of monsters already. Paint hard, dark cuts into the surfaces, and add small highlights to give them depth – this makes the glass look like it's reinforced. Erase the lines where damage runs through.



12 | BEGIN THE MONSTER

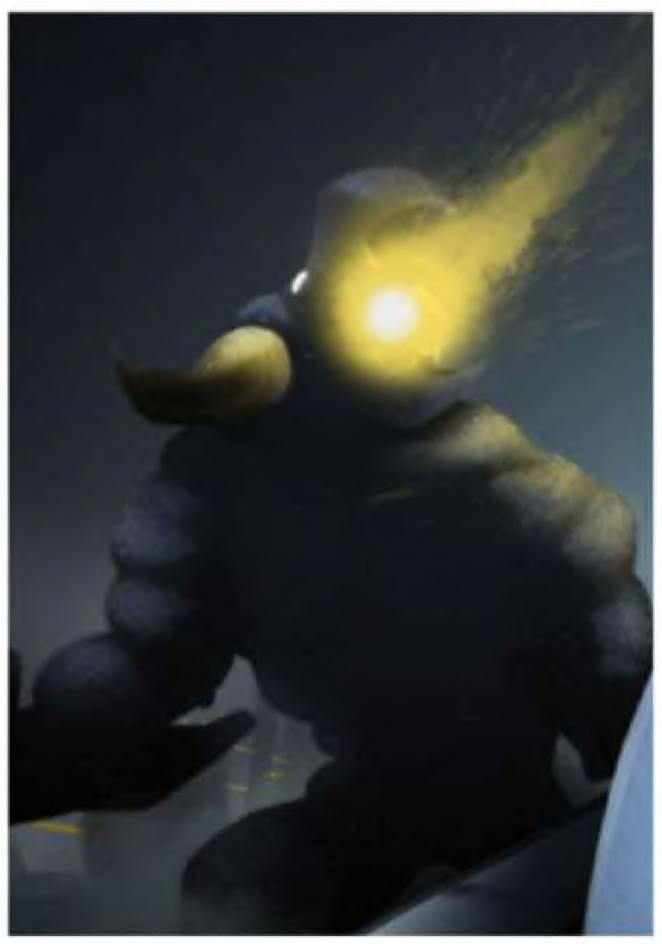
Start on the monster. Paint over the sketch with new flats. Don't make him too detailed – if not shaded with care, you could risk making him a major distraction from the main subject. We want most of his body to be engulfed in shadow, with sections of him highlighted by his own beam. We only make three colour layers: one for the face, one for the body, and one for his horns. Start shading, but keep it dark and low-contrast. Use the beam sketch as lighting guidance. We decided to remove the glowing veins in the end – too much detail proved distracting.



10 | THE ROBOT EXOSKELETON

Start shading the mecha that the character is sitting on. It's near the edge of the composition and far from the light source, so keep lighting to a minimum while still maintaining contrast to make the surfaces look metallic. Use the lighting to push the viewer's eye into the composition, not pull it out! Vary your painted strokes to create obvious differences in surfaces, i.e. soft shading on glass, harder shading on metals.

> "Use the lighting to push the viewer's eye into the composition, not pull it out!"



13 | LIGHT UP THE MONSTER

It's time to add the light beam. Create it using soft brushes for the centre, and textured brushes and erasers for the beam itself. Add blurred dashes to make it look like it's charging its attack. Once you're satisfied with the light direction, focus on detailing the shading. Add texture and paint in scales with a soft brush to give his body a leathery look.

ESSENTIAL ADJUSTMENTS

FINALISE BACKGROUND DETAILS AND PUSH THOSE TEXTURES



14 WORK UP THE CITY

The city is another high-light area that could cause a potential distraction. The buildings are very simple rectangles with as little detail as possible; bright colours suggest windows, lights, streets and lights off in the distant horizon. Overlay blues, yellows and magentas with a soft brush at low opacity to give life to the city. We also added a bokeh texture layer and set it to Overlay at low opacity to give it extra life. Add destruction: smoke brushes and scattered dot brushes will produce excellent destructive effects.



15 DETAIL THE SKY

Add some quick, simple detail to the sky. Use smoke brushes set to low opacity to create the clouds, and scattered dot brushes for the stars. Stars aren't very visible in city settings, so keep them light and few and far between. Keep the sky dark to assist the night setting, and to make our main subject seem even brighter. The strong contrast will ensure the viewer stays focused on the main subject.



16 START FINALISING DETAILS

The beam light source is in place; finish off the subject by adding yellow highlights where the light is brightest. Overlay yellow in the colour layer as well. The lighting should be dull on less reflective surfaces like her suit, but very bright on metal and glass surfaces.Shade the glass underneath the subject, and add a very light reflection. Flatten all subject layers then Edit>Transform>Rotate 180>Flip Horizontal. Adjust to the correct position – use the Warp tool to fit the reflection around the glass – erase any areas where the reflection overlaps and set the layer to Soft Light at a low opacity.

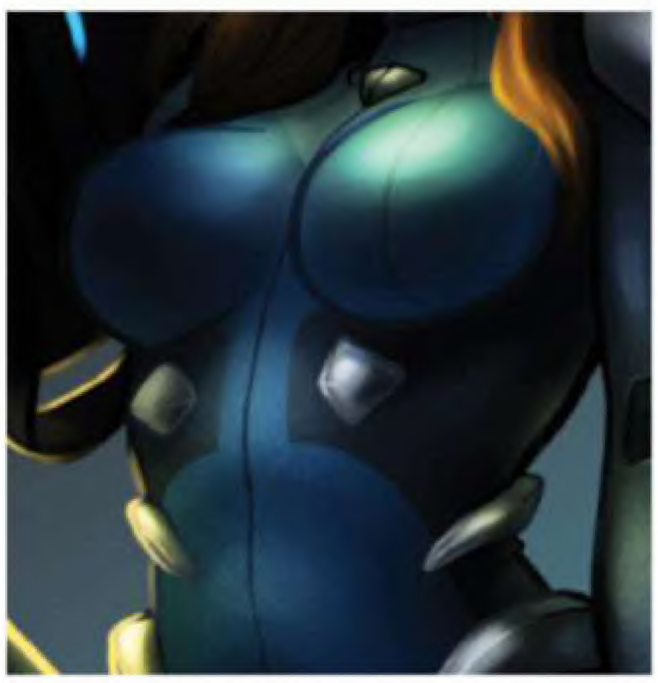


TIE COLOURS TOGETHER

Manga's often a sequential artform, so those thumbnails you created at the beginning of the process may well come in handy if you want to take another look at your character and composition from a different angle. Here we explored a more action-packed pose as our heroine emerges from her mecha. To work this up, you can colour-pick hues directly from your previous image to ensure that the colours are unified. If you have Photoshop CC, you can also make layers and individual elements into Assets, which can be stored in your CC Library and re-used over and over again across Photoshop and other CC programs and apps.

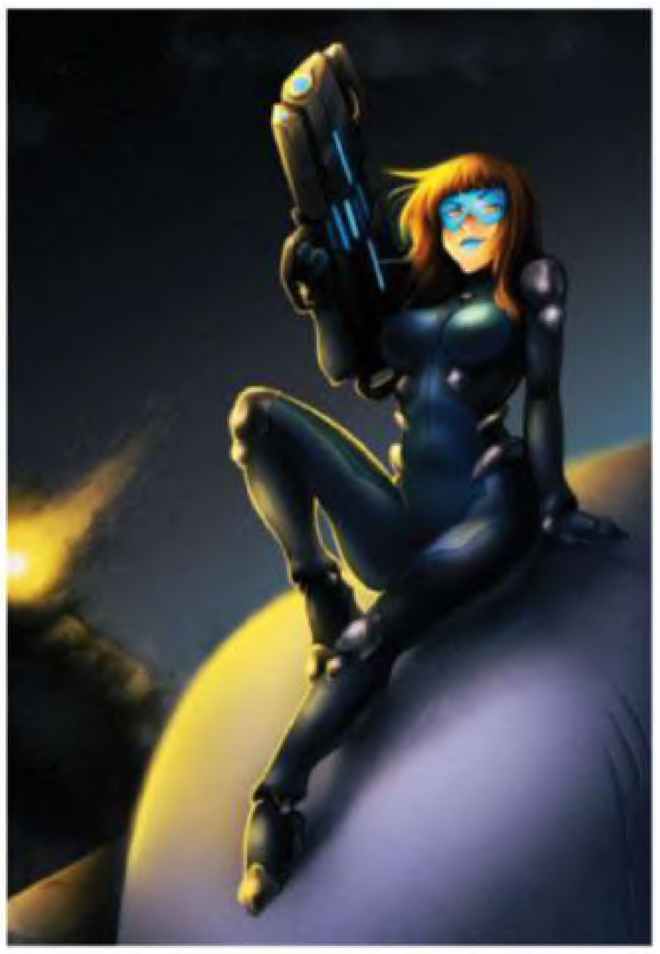
QUICK TIP

Speaking of having greater control: get unlimited Undos! Well, almost. Open Photoshop and go to Preferences>Performance and set History States to 1000. Enjoy mashing Cmd/Ctrl+Z!



17 ENHANCE WITH TEXTURES

Applying textures will help this piece to pop and not look so soft. They also add realism to manga without affecting the overall stylisation of the piece. Add a very fine material texture to the subject's suit, set to Soft Light and very low opacity. Use grunge texture brushes to add extra details to the monster, city and sky – grungy eroded effects will contrast well with the crisp detail of the main character, subtly enhancing the focal point.



18 FINAL COLOUR ADJUSTMENTS

Do a final colour check. Have some fun with this part! Once satisfied with the composition, save as a separate file and flatten all layers. Adjust the Levels (Ctrl+L) to really push the colours and contrast. Hit Auto Levels (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+L) and see what you get – you might be pleased with the results! Yellow ended up being a very powerful part of this piece, so overlay some blue to balance it out and really make the colours pop.



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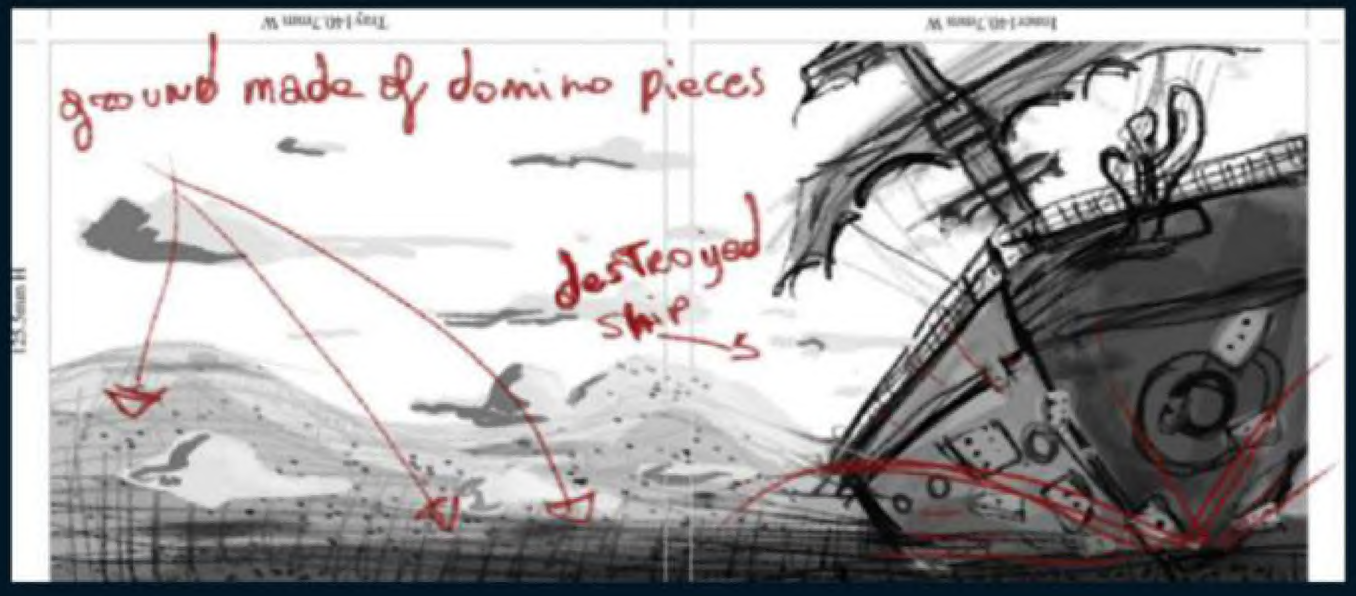


7 YEAR STORM

ALESSANDRO CLENER AND LEONARDO DENTICO

DISCOVER HOW TWO ARTISTS POOLED THEIR TALENTS TO CREATE THIS AMAZING ALBUM COVER

When 3D artist Alessandro Clener, (**www.behance.net/alessandroclener**) and creative retoucher Leonardo Dentico, (**www.leonardodentico.com**) were commissioned to design and produce an album cover for musician Chris Zoupa: "he asked for something that could represent the stream of consciousness. The title involved a storm (more like a mind storm), so we chose to create a really surreal image by using some domino pieces instead of actual sea." Released under the name *Seventh Dan Counterforce*, the album – and the cover artwork – is entitled *Seven Year Storm*. The artwork shown here forms the front and back outer covers. Clener and Dentico also created the inner cover artwork too (which forms a 'calm after the storm' companion piece and which you can see at **www.behance.net/gallery/20167313/7-Year-Storm**). Combining Maya, Mental Ray and Photoshop, the image was built in 3D first, before post-production commenced in Photoshop, using Curves, Levels and other adjustments to hone the composition. Find out more about how the duo collaborated to produce this unique artrtwowrork as they guide us through their process in 3D and Photoshop.

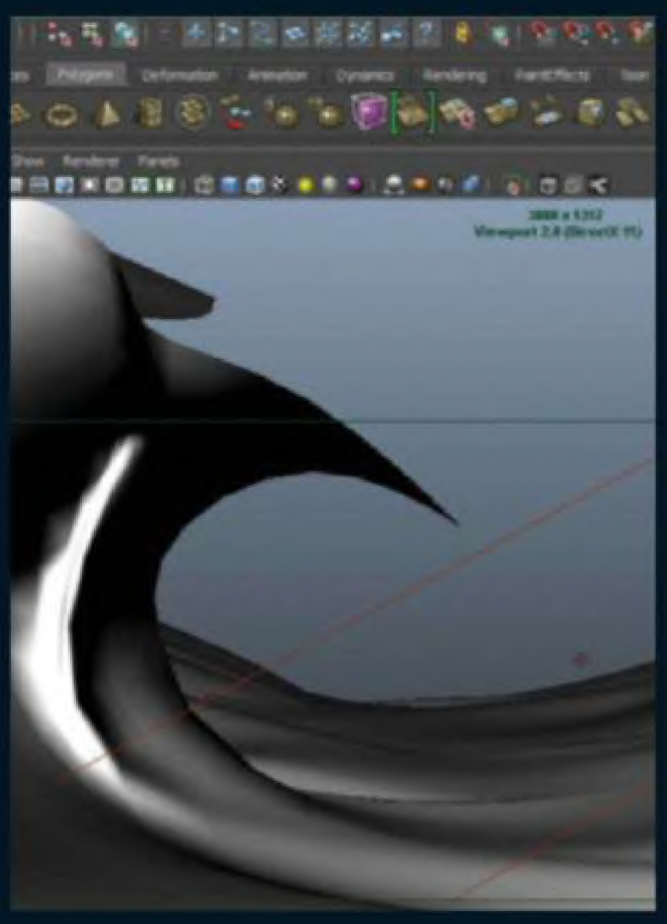


01 SKETCH

We created the sketch really fast, with PS brushes and following the layout of the cover. It was important to keep the boat on the frontal cover and a really detailed background for the back cover.

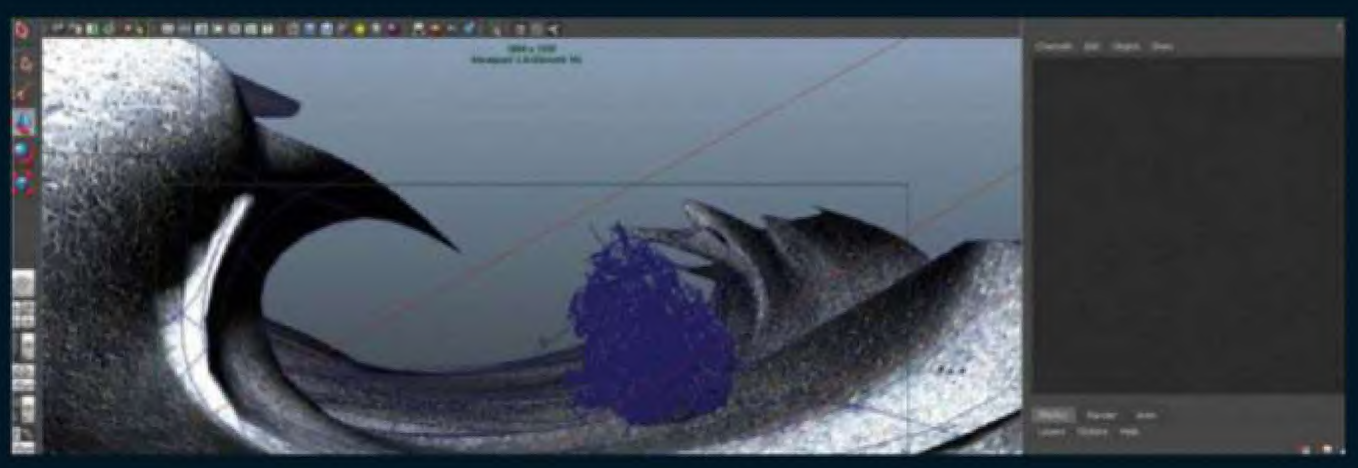
02 | BUILDING THE CGI SCENE

I modelled the first waves with simple plans, deformed to achieve the desired effect – something like a stormy sea. For the dominoes, I modelled one and changed the texture until the tenth.

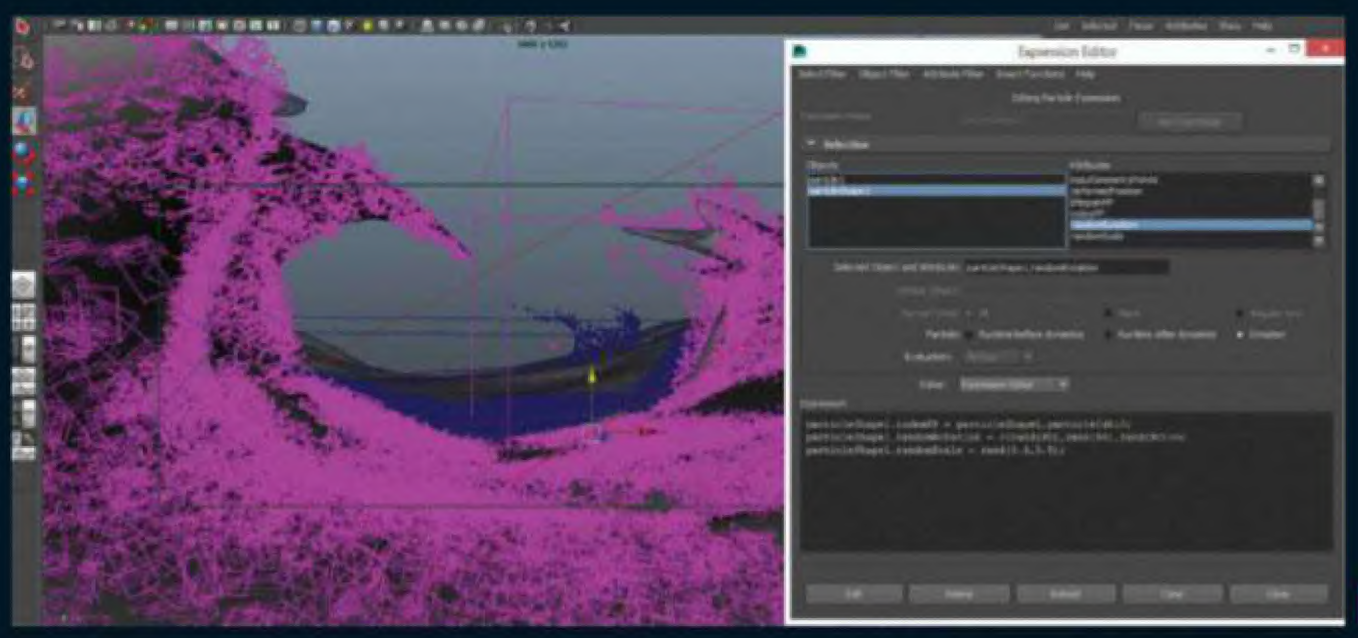


03 | TEXTURING AND LIGHTING

The textures and the model of the ship have been modified to look old and damaged. I used a flat domino image for the furthest away planes. The lighting is a physical sun and sky.



> The title involved a storm (more like a mind storm), so we chose to create a really surreal image by using some domino pieces instead of actual sea

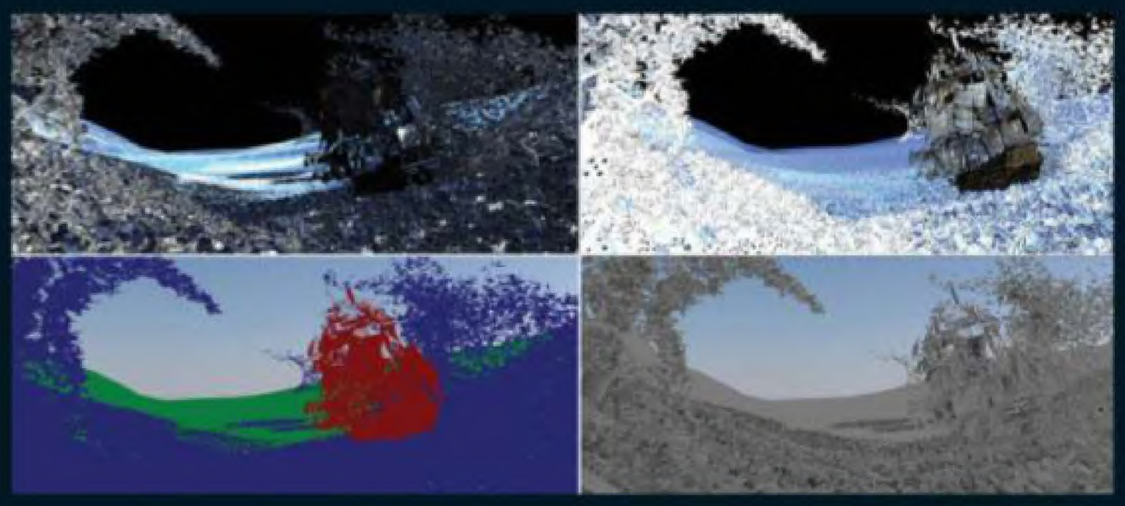


04 | DOMINO PARTICLES

In order to handle a large number of dominoes, I used the Mass Instancer (a plugin for Maya and Mental Ray). It allowed me to randomly place thousands of dominoes. I randomised their scale and rotation with an Expression.

05 | RENDERING

For the final rendering in MentalRay I used some pretty basic render passes including Diffuse, Indirect, Reflection, Specular, Ambient Occlusion and ID to help with selective colour correction during the post-production phase.



06 | COMPOSITING

I corrected the passes with Curves and adjustment layers, in order to give the right aspect to reflections and lights. This helped me to obtain the right balance in the image.



07 | FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND DOMINOES

With the Clone tool and Transform tool, I used some images rendered separately in order to fill the very background parts with realistic textures, and other ones for the foreground pieces.



08 | FINALISE THE IMAGE

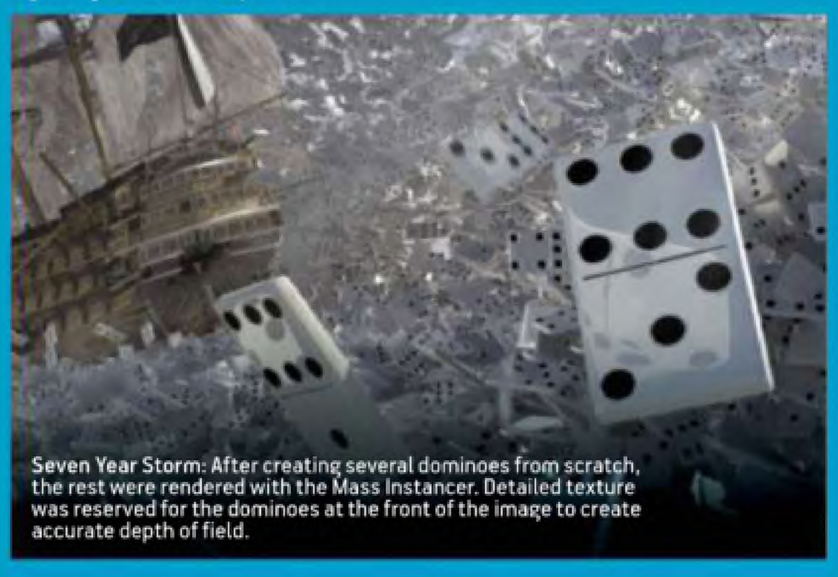
For the final step, I added a sky and balanced its lighting and colours using Levels. Then I painted fog and light rays with a soft brush to enhance the atmosphere.



COMBINING 3D AND PHOTOSHOP

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CLENER AND DENTICO'S WORKFLOW

First we brainstormed the concept, then we created a [quick] sketch, to have a general idea about the composition and light direction. Then we started to build the CGI scene in Maya, worked on textures and lighting, and rendered out the passes. Finally we brought it into Photoshop, where we mostly adjusted colours, lighting and atmosphere.



Seven Year Storm: After creating several dominoes from scratch, the rest were rendered with the Mass Instancer. Detailed texture was reserved for the dominoes at the front of the image to create accurate depth of field.

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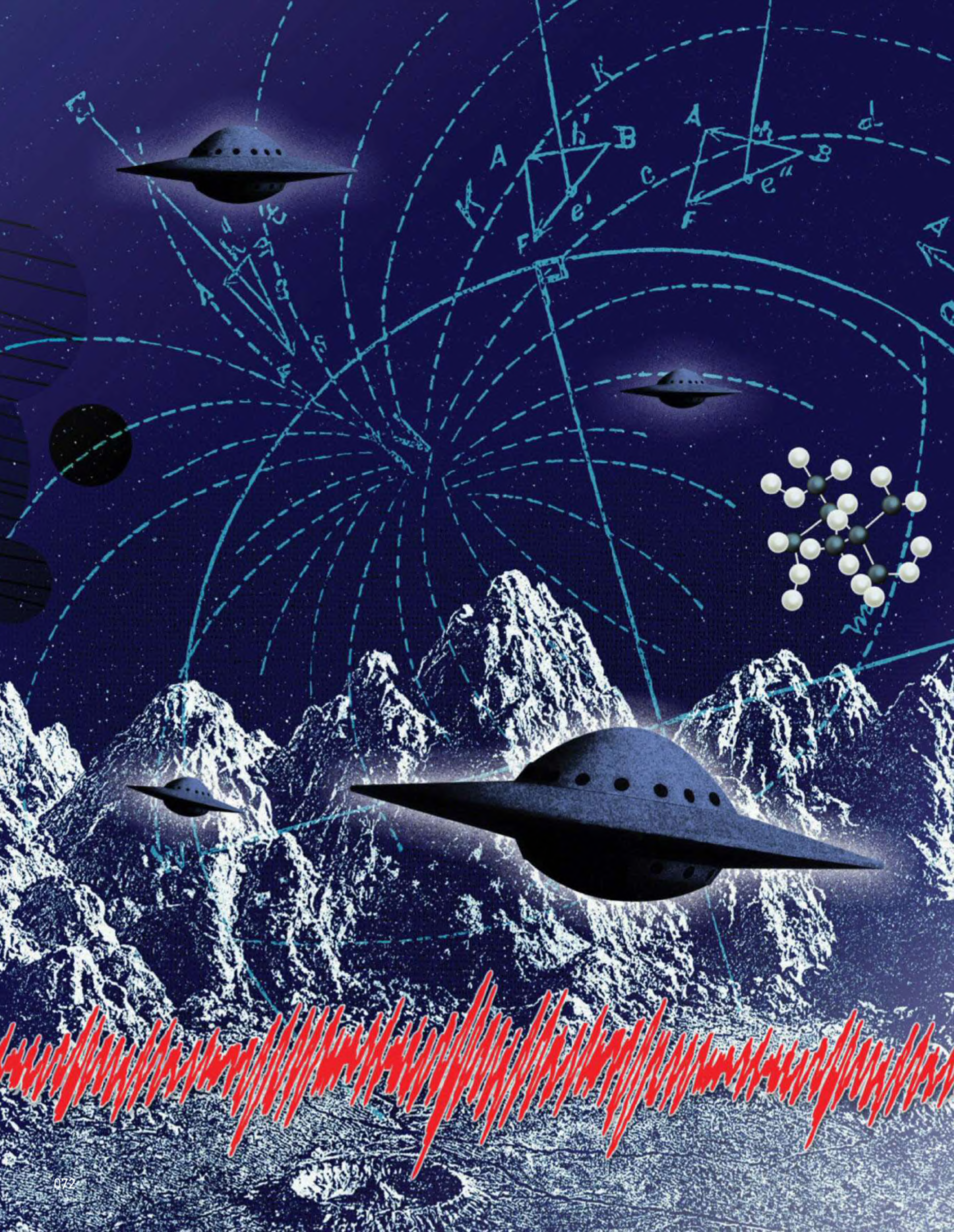
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GET THE RETRO SCI-FI LOOK

CREATE THE CLASSIC MID-CENTURY MODERN SCI-FI STYLE WITH THIS OTHERWORLDLY TUTORIAL

With an ever-increasing interest in creating a retro look, and a huge upsurge in kitsch and classic design and imaging that has appeared on the creative circuit, have some fun re-creating your very own sci-fi flying saucer design.

Creating authentic and visually interesting digital design has never been more fun than it is at the moment. Try creating retro elements from scratch using old commercial images as a ready style guide of ideas to use as reference. Scan old photographs and negatives, then use all or parts of them to give an authentic touch or texture to new creations and go explore! There is an almost unlimited online reference library at your disposal and it gets bigger every day.

With layering, accurate and controlled application of technique, a wide choice of Photoshop filters and combinations, as well as vast range of available third-party plugins and actions, Photoshop is the perfect tool to use in creating the retro and vintage look.



OUR EXPERT

TIM LUCAS
kitschstock.com
@Retrostockex

Graphic designer and retro-digital imaging creative and founder of www.retrostockexpress.com and www.kitschstock.com

SOURCE FILES

Enclosed in the download you'll find the final RGB 300dpi psd, flat CMYK version, snapshots and all user tutorial files. Plus get a huge selection of Retrostock images on FileSilo!

ASSEMBLE THE ELEMENTS

START COLLATING THE IMAGE ASSETS THAT WILL FORM THE BASIS OF YOUR ARTWORK

01 CREATE THE RETRO LOOK

Research the look you want to create. Vintage picture libraries, old advertising archives, museum catalogues, Wiki Commons and image search capabilities mean that, whatever the subject, there are reference materials out there to use as a guide. This is invaluable as a starting point to producing that authentic look, while using composition, texture and colour techniques that are indicative of past decades.



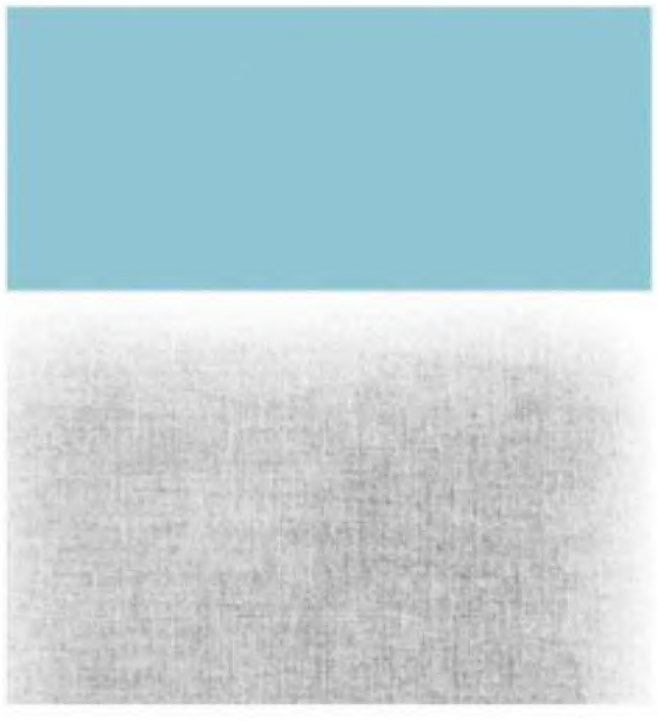
02 THE GROUND UP

When designing your work, make sure that the image subject, colour and format works for what it is intended. For this tutorial, create an RGB document 240mm x 310mm at 300dpi. Add a working base colour by filling the first layer with 42% Cyan, 8% Magenta and 12% Yellow, from the CMYK mixer. You will be continually adding layers, to combine and create the end result.



03 ADD TEXTURE

Open the file 'retro_texture1' and locate at the bottom of the main working file window. Use Cmd/Ctrl+Shift when dragging from one doc to ano-ther to locate the file in the middle of the main window. From the layers palette menu choose Color Burn and set it to 21% Opacity. A subtle textural layer can help to add an authentic feel to the end result.



WORK IN PROGRESS

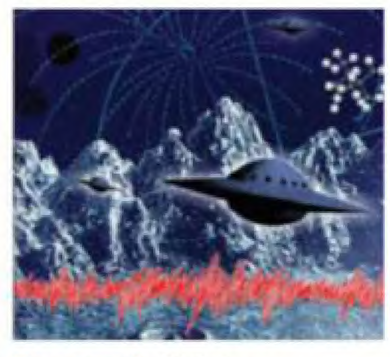
CREATING A CLASSIC LOOK



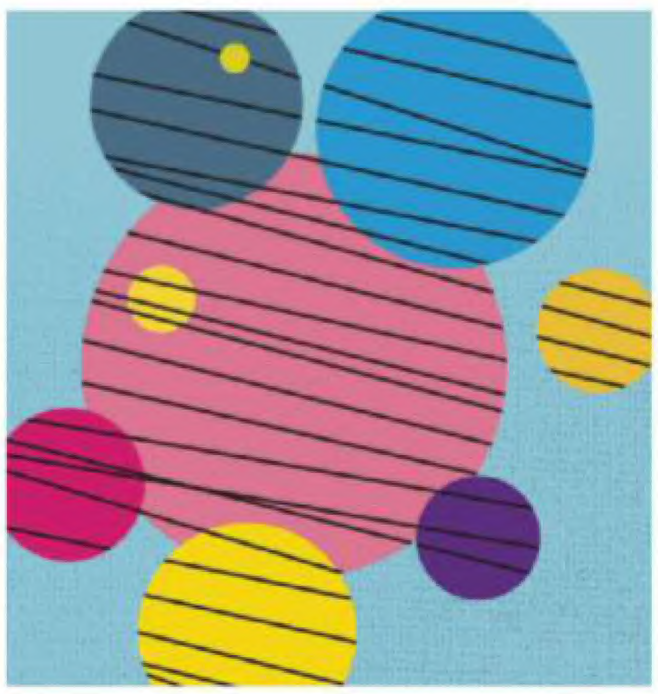
Progress 1: Add retro elements



Progress 2: Add a graduated fade



Progress 3: Add the finishing touches



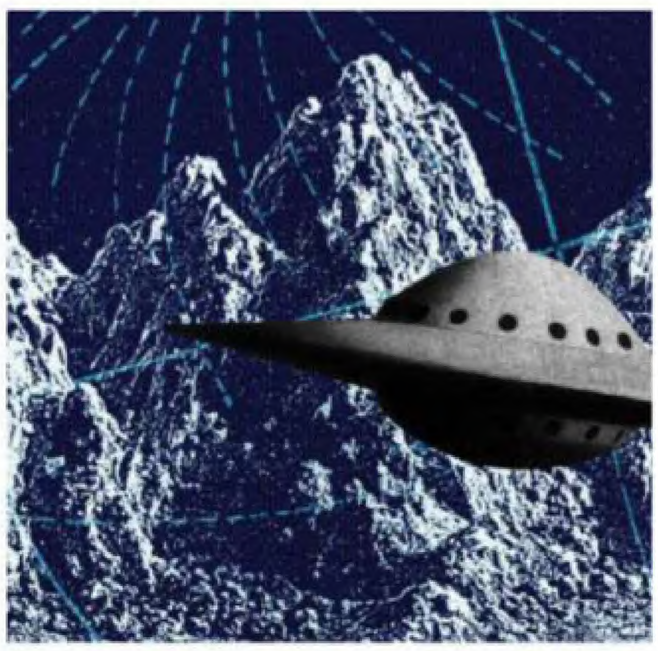
04 | CHOOSE YOUR ELEMENTS

Import 'retro_circles1' and position it on the left-hand side. In the Layers palette, combine using Color Burn at 17% Opacity. Retro imagery often includes unusual design elements, and the ones for this tutorial are provided here for you to use. Preparing the list of elements for your image (plus extras to fall back on) saves time. If you know what you want to achieve, or have reference examples at hand, this will help to avoid the composition becoming difficult or confusing to look at.



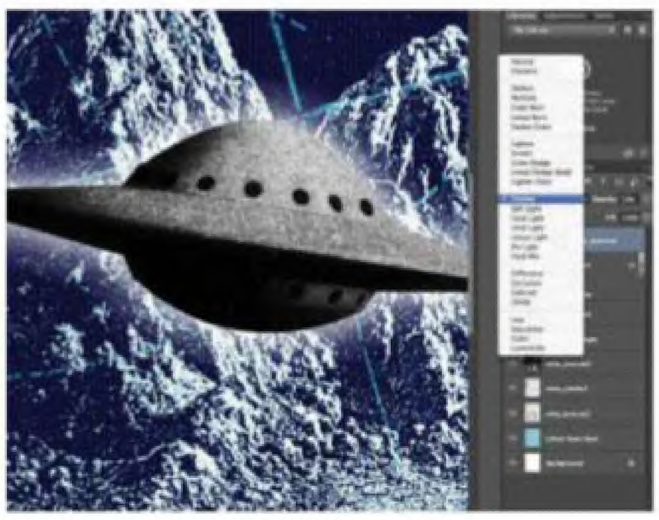
05 | COMBINE BACKGROUND TEXTURES

Combining layers for this scene requires a suitable vintage backdrop to place the retro elements on. Open file 'retro_texture2', and position it to cover the entire image. Set it to Overlay at 45% Opacity. Create a new layer and fill this with 100% Black, then set this to Overlay with 55% Opacity. This layer will help to darken and mute the strength and shapes of the layers below. The third texture to import is 'retro_texture3'. This is in the same location, but is combined at 100% Opacity as an Overlay.



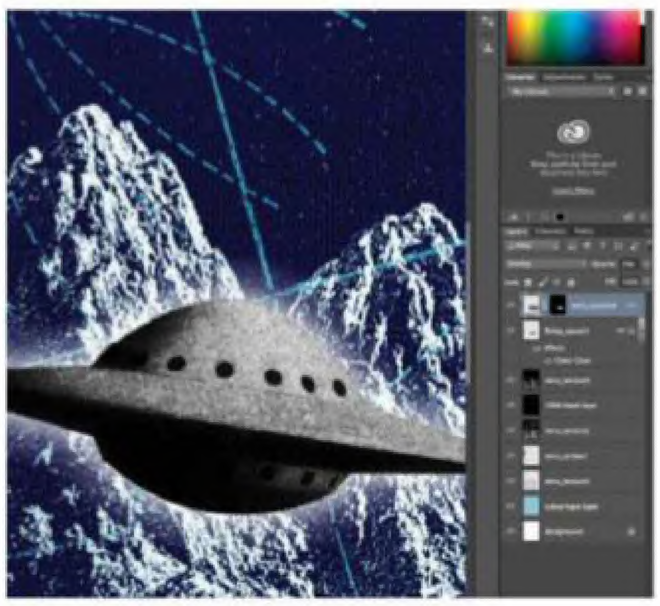
06 | ADD SOMETHING OTHERWORLDLY

The main focal point of any retro flying saucer image is the craft itself. Open 'flying_saucer1' and import it into the bottom right of the main work file. Choose Layer>Layer style>Outer Glow, or pick Outer Glow from the FX menu on the layers palette. Set the blend mode to Normal, the Noise to 52, the Opacity 82%, the Spread to 18, the Size to 114, the Range to 84 and the Jitter to 52. Add some distressing to the saucer to age the shape. The aura sitting around the spacecraft gives it energy as if it's hovering in space.



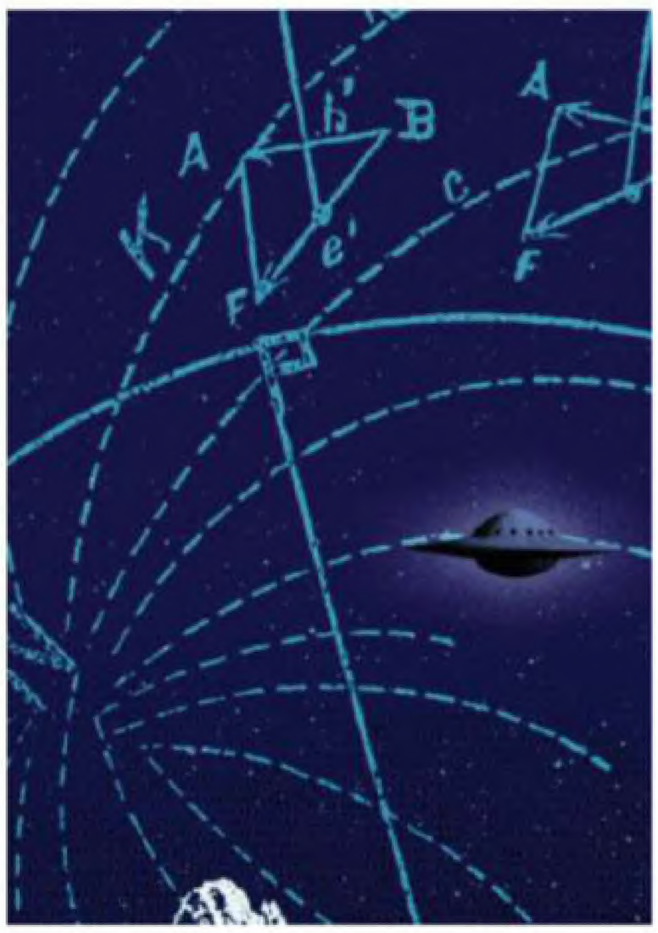
07 | DISTRESS THE SUBJECT

Open 'retro_texture4' and drag it into the main work file so it covers the saucer. Feather the saucer shape selection by 0.3 to soften the edge and then clicking the new texture layer, create a mask from the layers menu (or invert the selection and go to Layers>Layer Mask>Reveal All). Set this layer to Overlay and 29% Opacity. With the flying saucer layer still selected, click on the filter icon at the bottom of the Layers palette to create a photo filter. This will automatically create the saucer-shape mask with the marquee selected. Select Filter>Deep Blue set to 70% Opacity and leave the Preserve Luminosity box unchecked.



08 | BUILD THE SCENE

Move the saucer filter layer so it sits above 'retro_texture4', then link the 'flying_saucer1', 'Photo filter1' and 'retro_texture4' layers together. This will enable you to re-locate, angle and resize the saucer and its linked layers easily to produce additional versions. Adding extra, smaller versions of the flying saucer into the frame will help the image feel more energetic, with more depth. Arranging even more small saucers, of varying sizes, will give the impression of an invasion fleet or mass visitation - think 'earth vs. the flying saucers!'



09 | BUILD THE SCENE

Copy three more saucer versions and arrange/rotate/size as shown in the final image. For the two smaller flying saucers, re-open the Layer Style palette and amend the Outer Glow so that the Opacity is set to 35%, the Spread to 10, the Range to 52 and the Jitter to 52. This will soften the glow and distance the two saucers from those in the foreground. You could also alter each ship's colour filter as you wish.

QUICK TIP

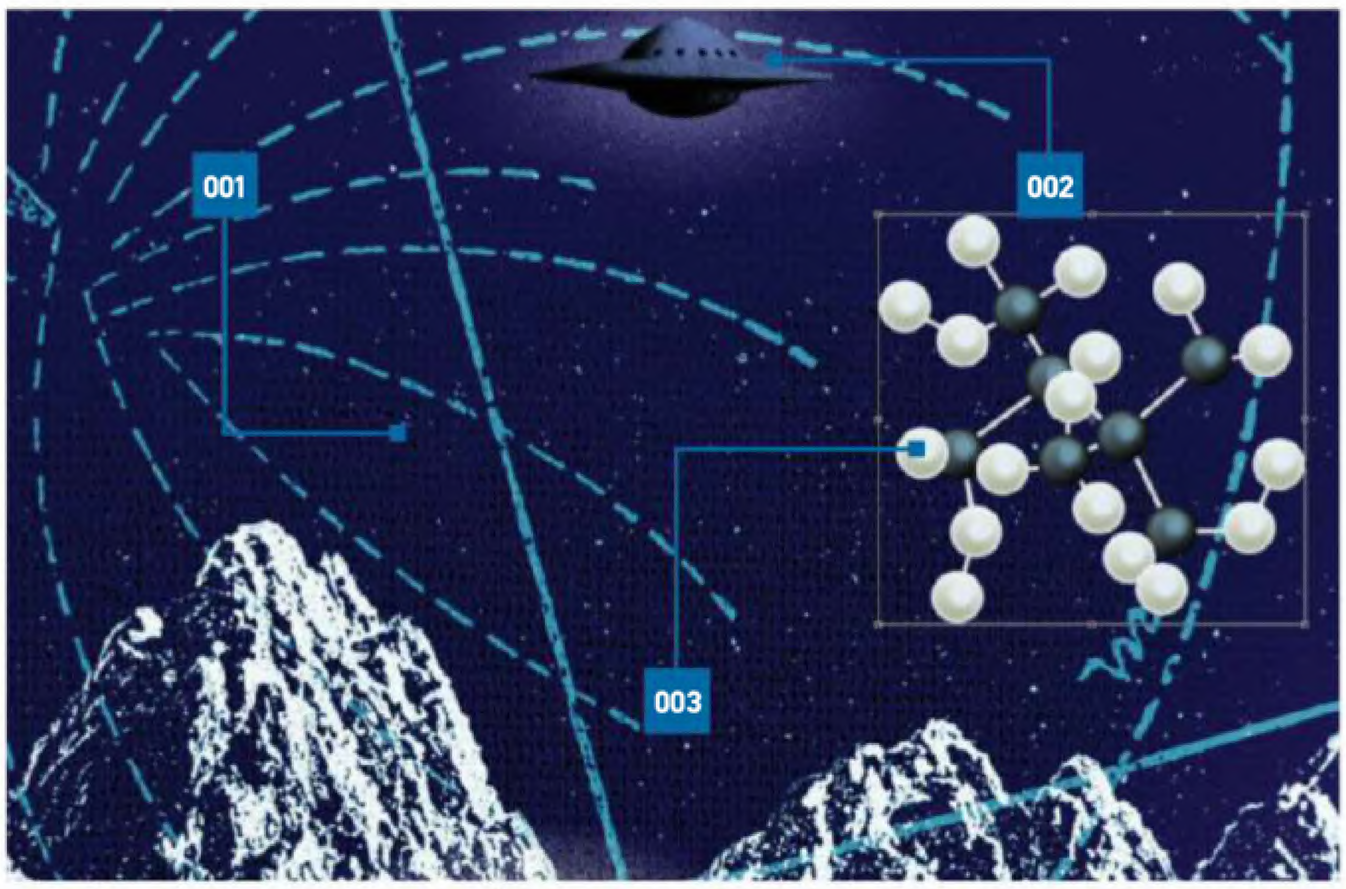
When looking for an authentic-looking flying saucer, first try looking for available household objects that can be quickly photographed, then re-worked to give the saucer shape, such as bowls or tea saucers. Try to choose things without obvious patterning or logos, to save time having to remove these features later.

BRING THE ELEMENTS TOGETHER

USE FILTERS AND CREATIVE EFFECTS TO START UNIFYING THE IMAGE

10 | PREPARE AND COMPOSE ELEMENTS

Start to finalise your colour choices for the background and flying saucer elements. At this stage you are able to experiment with the colour and composition to create the look that you want, before finalising and starting to work on the image as a whole instead of individual elements. Once you're ready, lock down your composition and prepare for the final push.



001 | TEXTURE BACKGROUND COMBINATIONS
Combine the textured backgrounds to create the text of colour and provide an interesting backdrop for the main subjects.

002 | PHOTO FILTER OVERLAYS
Use Photo filter overlays to add additional colour characteristics to your composition. Selecting the layer elements prior to creating the colour filter will automatically mask and protect other areas of the image.



12 | MIRROR AN EFFECT

Set the gradient layer to 50% Opacity to create the light bleed effect. Make a copy of this layer by choosing Layer>Duplicate Layer. Rotate this new layer by 180° and place it in the top left corner, making sure that the edges of the gradient fill are flushed with the edges of the image. Reduce the Opacity of this second gradient to 20%. Now you have two light fades, which help to age the image. You could also use and combine other colours to give differing results.

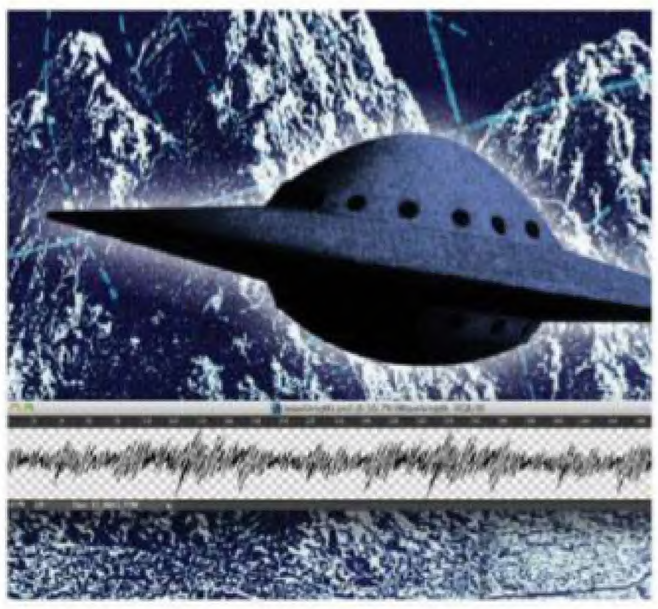


11 | ADD FADEOUT

Click on the 'retro_texture3' layer and create a new layer, called 'graduated light bleed'. This graduated layer will partially fade out the corner of the background and help to age the image. Select the Gradient tool from the Tools palette, and choose white to Transparent. Drag a 45° diagonal line from the bottom-right corner of the image to just below the largest flying saucer.

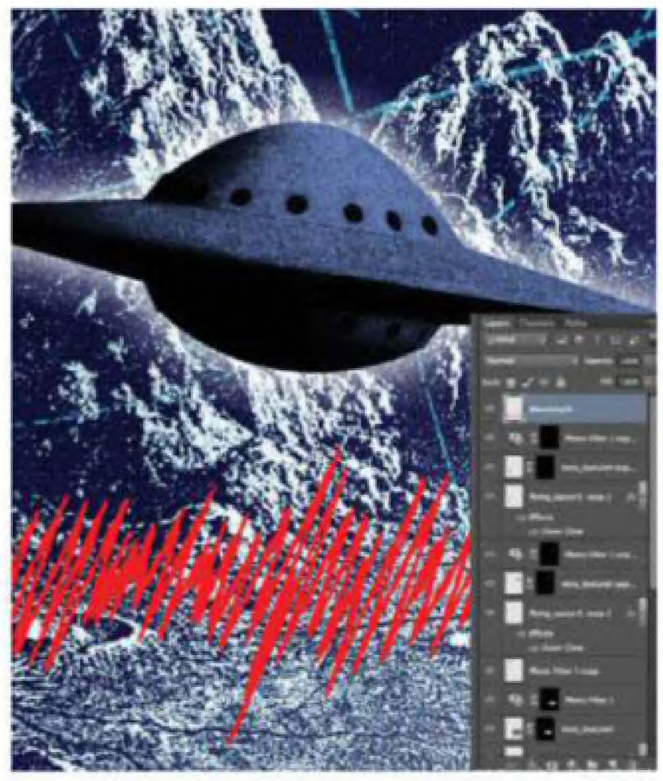
> "The futuristic gadgetry and technology used to make the unreal seem more believable, was popular in Fifties sci-fi movies"

003 | FINALISING THE IMAGE
Adding the final details to any composition can make the difference. Choosing carefully what and where you place these elements will strengthen the message.



13 | ON OUR WAVELENGTH

The futuristic gadgetry and technology used to make the unreal seem more believable was popular in Fifties sci-fi movies. Boffins in white coats and space captains in metallic uniforms; prodding and pressing buttons or gazing knowingly at screens and flashing lights. A simple wavelength graphic was created to give the hint of science without it being present. This file was created in Illustrator but could be created using the Pen and Fill tools in Photoshop. One version has been used here, but smaller versions could be added and coloured differently, to add to the effect.



14 | SELECT AND COLOUR

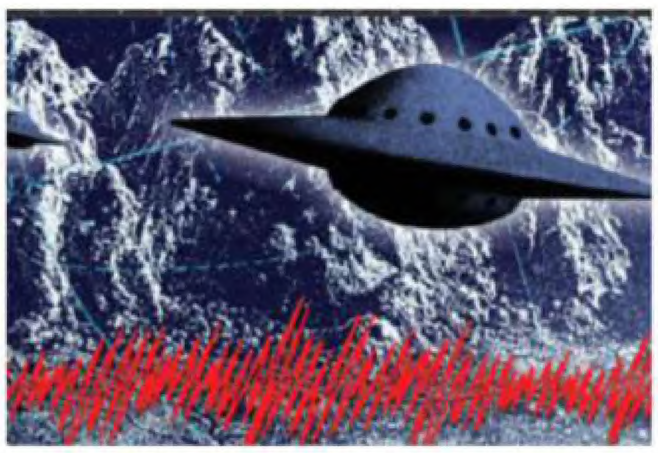
Open the wavelength graphic file and re-position it at the bottom of the frame. The wavelength will need altering to make it contrast with the background and stand out. Ensure that the wavelength frame is selected. Lock Transparent Pixels and fill the layer with 100 Magenta and 100 Yellow from the CMYK slider palette (or the RGB equivalents). The red fill lifts the shape of the wavelength and helps to make it more interesting to look at. Adjust the location to suit and then unclick Lock Transparent Pixels before continuing.

CREATE THE FINAL TOUCHES

DUPLICATE AND COMBINE LAYERS TO ENHANCE FOCAL POINTS AND ADD DEPTH

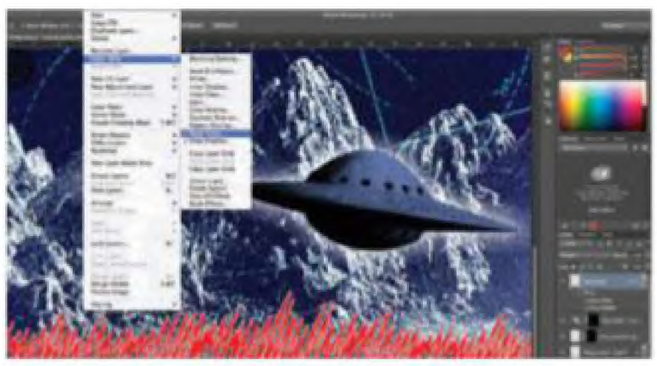
15 | UPLIFTING ELEMENTS

Now that the wavelength graphic is the right colour, it needs added energy and boldness to it to give it more impact. With the wavelength layer selected, add a Drop Shadow, which will separate and lift the wavelength slightly from the textured surface underneath. The key is that it separates the wavelength visually from the background. Feel free to experiment with the drop shadow strength at the end if added oomph is required!



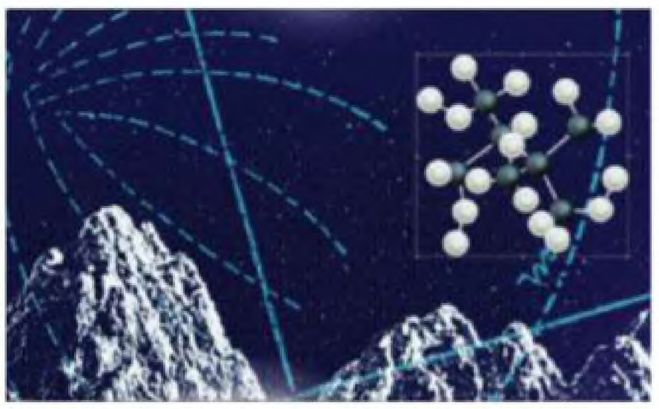
16 | OUTER SPACE, OUTER GLOW

To finish the bottom of the frame we need to add an Outer Glow that is small enough not to destroy the Drop Shadow, but obvious enough to define the shape. From the Layer FX menu, choose Outer Glow. Set the Opacity to 75%, the Noise to 0, the Spread to 8, the Size to 6, the Range to 5 and the Jitter to 0. The Drop Shadow is still evident and lifts the graphic off the page in a subtly. The white edge definition defines the shape, making it stand out. Now the image begins to feel more like an authentic sci-fi poster.



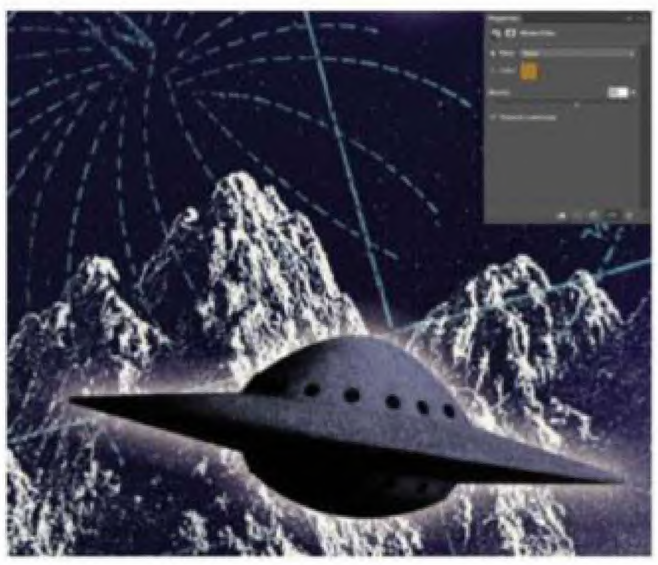
17 | FINAL ELEMENT

As it was called the 'atomic era', it's only right to include the atom in the frame. The final file is named 'Atomic_structure'. Import it, using the final example file as a location guide, or choose your own spot to place the image. Atomic structures were used a lot in the Fifties, both in business, as well as in science fiction productions. They were seen as a symbol of energy and the future. Who knows, the atomic compound structure used here may be for no more than humble vintage washing powder, but it looks the part!



18 | COLOUR SHIFT

One of our favourite things about Photoshop is the endless choice when it comes to creating variations of the work produced. For example, you can stop here and the end result is powerful, but there is so much more you can do. Try adding a new Photo Filter layer at the top of the layers palette and experiment with colour combinations. Move this layer below the flying saucer layers and the colour shift can be applied to the background only, with differing results. Adding extra textures, lighting, vignetting and layer combinations will provide lots of options to try.



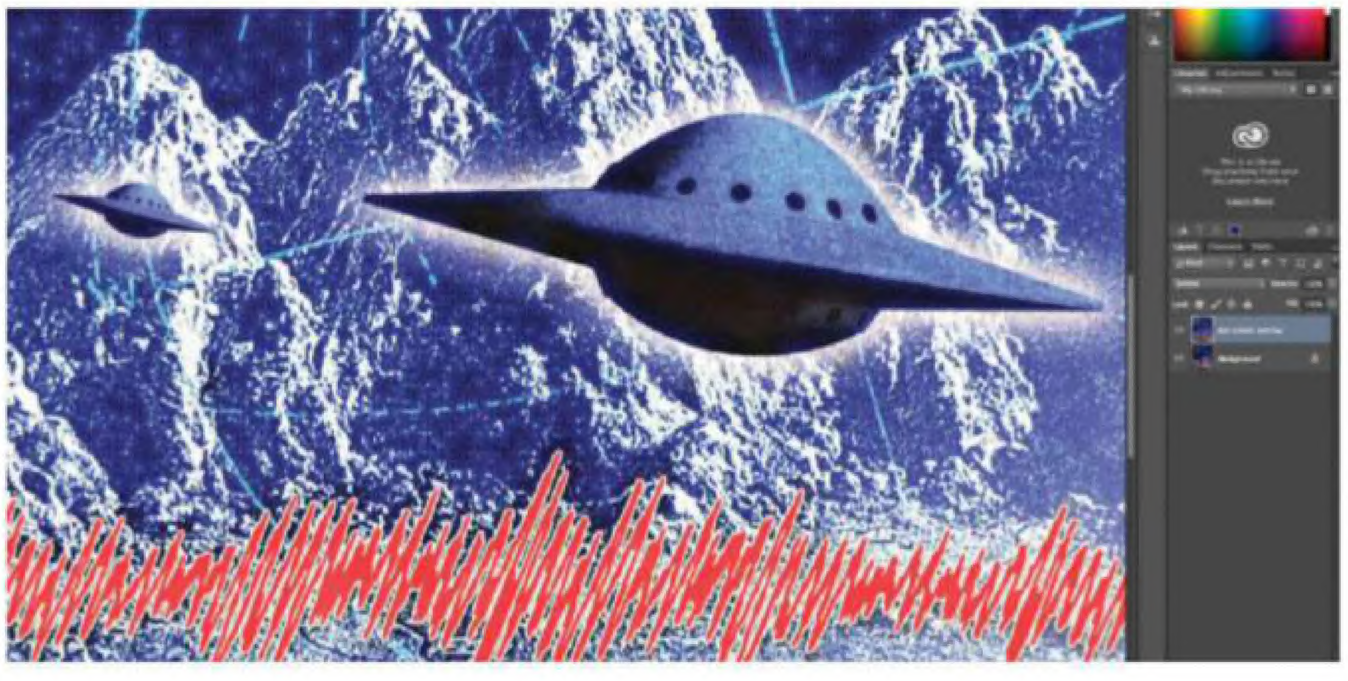
19 | PLUGINS

This retro tutorial would not be complete without recognising halftones and their importance to the feel of vintage printed material. The effect of separating the colours into colour dots, which combine to create the whole image, adds a feel to graphics that is used by many retro digital artists. Photoshop includes halftone filter options to try (Filter>Pixelate>Color Halftone). However, there are some great options on the market such as Permanent Press by **Misterretro.com**. Version 2 offers a range of retro tools, including lots of halftone effects to explore.



RETRO FREEBIES!

Most available plugins that offer great retro effects offer a cut-down or time-limited version to try for free. This is a great way to check out what is on offer and make sure that you like the look and feel of the software before committing to purchase, as well as the choice of effects on offer. There are also a huge range of low cost, or free, actions available online for you to try out and use to experiment using on your work. Places like deviantART are a great starting point, where the filters are often created by creatives, which can really help!



QUICK TIP

By creating a flat copy of all the layers (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt/Alt+E) and then creating copies of this flat layer, great results can be found by applying filters to these additional layers and experimenting with different layer combinations. Combining a pixelated layer with a normal flattened version can result in some wonderful effects.

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PHOTO AGEING WITH FILTER FORGE

LEARN HOW TO COMBINE THE LATEST VERSION OF FILTER FORGE WITH PHOTOSHOP, TO TRANSFORM A PHOTO INTO A VINTAGE POSTCARD

If you're creating a series of images that have the same overall feel, like a set of retro images, then you can record an Action in Photoshop to do some of the hard work for you. However, you can make this process even easier by using Filter Forge, as either a standalone application or as a plugin to automate much of the process.

Here you'll learn how to create a filter that replicates the look of an aged vintage photograph, complete with distressed edges. Start by creating a filter in Filter Forge. The great thing about this is, just like an Action, once you've made your filter you can use it again and again – but unlike an Action, by using Filter Forge's Image component, you can make the filter respond to the image that you use it on, so you will always get a perfect result. Add final touches in Photoshop with some textures and a layer mask, and you'll have a perfect retro-style photo and a filter you can use to create an entire series of images.

Visit **www.filterforge.com** to download a trial of Filter Forge 4.0, or pick up a back issue of Advanced Photoshop issue 130 to get your hands on the full version of Filter Forge 3.0 Standard.



OUR EXPERT

APRIL MADDEN
@advancedpshop

As the editor of *Advanced Photoshop* Magazine, I love to experiment with new effects and plugins for Photoshop.

SOURCE FILES

Try out this process in Filter Forge with the supplied start image

GET THE AGED PHOTO LOOK

SIMPLIFY YOUR PROCESS BY CREATING A FILTER



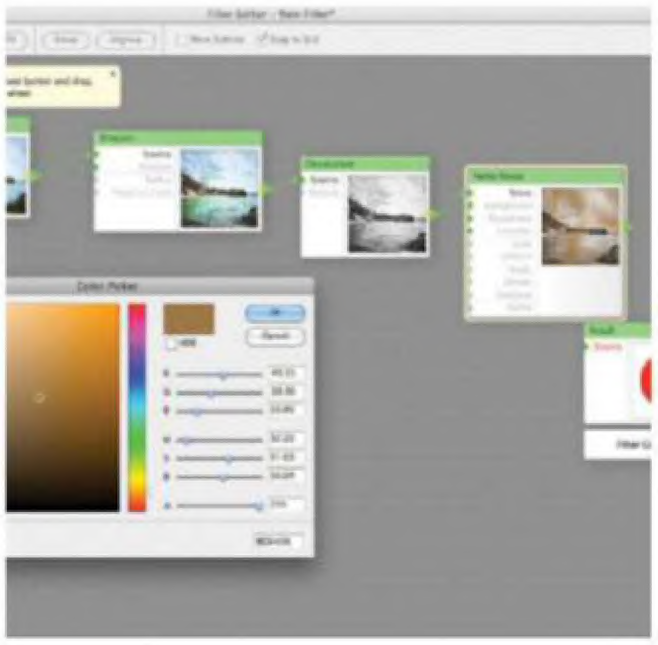
01 OPEN THE FILTER EDITOR

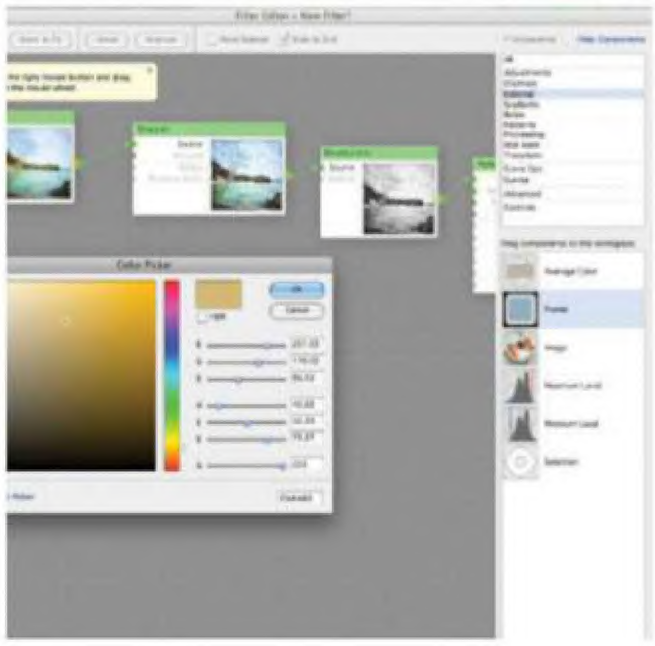
Open your image in Filter Forge and go to the Filter Editor. Choose Create New and then drag the Image pane into the window (find this under External). Now choose Sharpen from the Processing menu and connect its Source to the Image pane. Set the Amount to 100 and the Radius to 35 to create an over-sharpened effect that mimics the look of an old camera.



02 DESATURATE YOUR IMAGE

Now choose Desaturate from the Adjustments menu and connect its Source to the Sharpen pane. Under Method, choose Average. You should be aiming to create a slightly blurred black and white look with clean definition and no vignetting, to replicate the look of a 1930s camera. Don't worry if the contrast looks flat, that's the effect that we're looking for!





03 MAKE SOME NOISE

Now go to the Noise category and drag the Perlin Noise component into the main window. Connect Noise to the Desaturate component and then click on Background. Choose a sepia colour like 8C6436, to create the look of a sepia photograph. More of the colour will show up on areas of high exposure, creating a realistic vintage look.

04 ADD A FRAME

Now go to the External category and drag in the Frame component. For the Inner Frame and Margin categories, choose a more gold-toned, less saturated colour than the sepia you chose for the overall colour cast. Set the Outer Frame to black and dial down the Frame Width, Margin Width and Corners to create a skinny, postcard-style frame.

WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM PHOTO TO FINISHED IMAGE



Progress 1: Load up Filter Forge



Progress 2: Create your filter



Progress 3: Add some textures in Photoshop

QUICK TIP

You can create your own filters or download additional user-generated ones from the Filter Forge website. You can also modify any pre-existing Filter Forge filter to create your own variant on it, giving you complete control every time.



05 APPLY A TEXTURE

Render and save the image in Filter Forge and then open it up in Photoshop. Open a paper texture (try **www.cgtextures.com** for examples) and place it over the postcard artwork. Set it to Overlay at 60% Opacity to create the look of an aged, weathered postcard.



06 OVERLAY A POSTCARD

Now choose a postcard texture that has distinctive edges and place this underneath the artwork. Reduce the opacity of the artwork layer so that you can line the edges up correctly.



07 CREATE A LAYER MASK

Now create a layer mask on the artwork layer, and use a soft black brush to mask away the corners, so that the edges of the postcard texture form the edges of the final piece. If there are any bits of texture that you really like on the postcard layer, reveal these with a low-opacity black brush.



PERFECT PORTRAITS WITH DXO OPTICS PRO 10

USE DXO OPTICS PRO 10'S LATEST FEATURES TO BRING OUT DETAIL IN YOUR CREATIVE PORTRAITS

Shooting a great portrait is often considered half the battle when trying to capture the mood and feel of a client's brief. The other half is all in the edit and stylisation. With DXO Optics Pro 10, you can call in the cavalry and level the playing field with a few straightforward adjustments that needn't be complicated or detrimental to the finished image.

Be it a final draft or a base image to export to another program, by using the latest features in DXO Optics Pro 10's armoury, you can guarantee perfect results almost instantly.

When shooting dramatic and interesting portraits, your aim is to make your subject what people are drawn to, and not the treatment. So, how do you use a powerful piece of software at its full potential to create subtle changes? Well, the first post-production trick is to correct issues with the shot from a technical standpoint. This is where DXO excels with its built-in lens database and smart lighting options. Secondly, edit without overtly exploiting what you are looking to achieve, as this can make your editing appear heavy-handed. For this tutorial, we will be using DXO's intuitive enhancement capabilities to adjust the tonal range and clarity of our image.



OUR EXPERT

JAMES SHEPPARD

As Imagine Publishing's in-house photographer I have over a decade's experience in commercial, editorial and portrait photography as well as nearly 20 years' experience with Photoshop. I love comics, check shirts and my dog.

OPTIMISE YOUR PORTRAITS

PHOTO EDITS TO BALANCE YOUR IMAGES



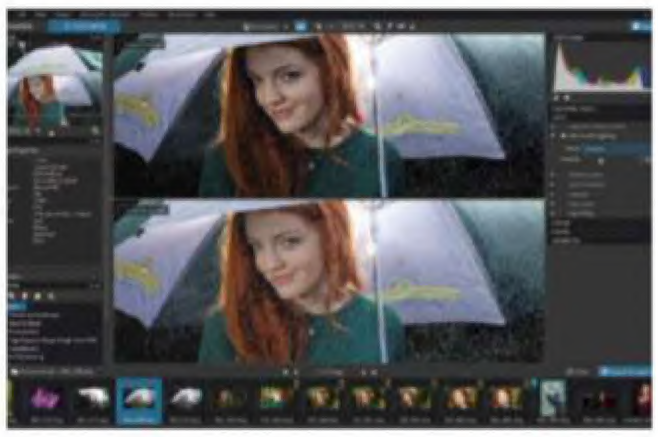
01 UPDATE YOUR LENS DATABASE.

As soon as you import an image or collection into DXO, it will bring up an auto update for the lens database. By allowing this, you will be updating your system with the relevant lens and body configuration relating to the images you've shot. Once you have updated your database with this configuration, you won't need to do it again. If you do want to check for updates, you can do so by clicking the DXO Optics Modules tab.



02 ADJUST THE AUTO-CORRECT

You will notice that it has a preference to auto adjust your image to what it perceives as the optimum state. This is no bad thing; in fact, it can help you learn more about what effect certain adjustments create within the software. In this tutorial however, we will click off the preset. Do this by Cmd/Ctrl+right-clicking your image, selecting 'Apply a Preset', and selecting 'No Correction'. This will revert the image to its RAW state.



03 SMART LIGHTING

Being shot outdoors in daylight – with a shaded background and two flashes to light the image –this can be considered mixed metering lighting. One of the quickest ways to adjust and balance mixed metered lighting is to use DXO Smart lighting. By setting the mode to custom and adjusting the Intensity to 33, you will notice that the image has become lighter without over-bleaching any of the lighter parts of the image.



04 SELECTIVE TONE

On top of using the Smart Lighting tool to bring back detail from shaded areas, we will also use the Selective tone tool. This will allow us to enhance all areas of the image in regards to tone, although, as stated at the beginning, the trick here is to be subtle. Adjust the Highlights to -10, then adjust the Midtones to 15. Reduce the Shadows to -15 and bump up the Blacks to 5. By doing this, you will notice that the overall feel of the image is becoming more even.



05 CLEAR VIEW

Clear View is one of the latest features to be used within DXO. It adds contrast and sharpness to your image, effectively making it a lot clearer by reducing any atmospheric haze. As this image has a subtle hazing from light reflections in the rain, we are adjusting its Intensity to 60. This will really only be a subtle change to the image, but it is one that will really help the overall feel of the shot when applied with the rest of the adjustments.



06 COLOUR ACCENTUATION

To add an extra punch of colour to your image, adjust the Colour Accentuation accordingly. Set the Vibrancy to 35 and the Saturation to -28. This way you can enhance the colours without making them garish. Secondly, utilise the HSL controls by increasing the Saturation to 13, reducing the Lightness to 2, and by clicking on the channel, select the reds. Increase the Reds to 18 and alter the Lightness to 10. Now your image will be bolder.

07 DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

Click the detail tab, set the Noise Reduction to High Quality, and set the Luminance to 52. Check the Advanced Settings and set the Chrominance to 65, the Low Freq to 39, the Dead pixels to 43. Now add more detail by selecting Lens softness, and setting the Global to 1.00, the Details to 85, the Bokeh to 15. Adjust the Chromatic Aberration by simply clicking the Lateral Chromatic Aberration and the Purple Fringing boxes. Unsharp the mask, and set the Intensity to 107, the Radius to 4.38, the Threshold to 254 and the Edge offset to 74.



QUICK TIP

Exporting files from DXO will allow you to save to disk, Facebook or Flickr. It will also allow you to directly export to third party software such as CS6, CC or Lightroom in a range of file formats ranging from JPG to DNG, expanding your workflow options for your preferred software.

PENTAX XG-1

THIS BUDGET-FRIENDLY BRIDGE CAMERA USES ITS MIGHTY ZOOM TO CAPTURE THE ACTION

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- **9fps at full resolution**
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If you are the kind of photographer who wants to capture it all, the 16MP Pentax XG-1 is sure to please. Its massive 52x optical zoom lens has the focal range to cover landscapes and portraits, it can zoom in on the action, and it even focuses down to 1cm to capture subjects up close. While it might not be as large as the Panasonic Lumix FZ72's 60x zoom, the Pentax still manages to pack in more than enough into its compact body, reaching to a huge 1,248mm in 35mm equivalent terms, and it's even got a 4x digital zoom on top of that.

One genre it is particularly suited to though, is action. Not only does its zoom enable you to stand well back, but it can also shoot at nine frames per second in full resolution, so you can freeze a split second of movement. In general, the focusing was also fast, if a little slow in low light, but the tracking AF mode kept up with moving subjects.

Image stabilisation helps with sharpness, but as you would expect, there is some softening when fully zoomed in, so you will need to sharpen in Photoshop. A tripod is definitely needed in this instance, but the zooming action is a smooth process using the zoom rocker on the top. It's also easy to hold the camera one-handed, with a large rubberized grip helping you to gain good purchase on a camera that overall feels of a sturdy build quality.

The clear menu system means that you can pick your options really easily and the camera features a trusty mode dial with a variety of choices, including







Zoom in: The zoom is operated via a lever, rather than the lens barrel, which will feel familiar to compact camera users.

CAPTURE THE ACTION

GET THE MOST OUT OF THE PENTAX XG-1'S ABILITIES TO SHOOT MOVEMENT



01 | SELECT FOCUSING MODE

For moving subjects, select Object Tracking from the AF menu. This will ensure the camera tracks subjects to keep it sharp. You may also want to select continuous shooting to take a burst of shots and increase your chances of capturing the moment.



02 | SET THE SHUTTER SPEED

Decide what shutter speed to use. A fast speed, above 1/125sec, will freeze action, but you may wish to select a speed of around 1/50sec to create some blur in the background – press the shutter and pan with the moving subject.



03 | CROP IN

You may get sharper results if you don't fully zoom in, so consider cropping in post production. If you do zoom in, use a monopod and turn on image stabilisation in order to keep it steady at longer focal lengths.

STANDOUT FEATURE

GET IN CLOSE WITH THE EXTENSIVE ZOOM OPTIONS ON OFFER

The 52x optical zoom lets you get in close to the action, which is great for keeping your distance from wildlife and sports subjects. The sensor-shift shake reduction technology helps to stabilise at longer focal lengths too. The sensor will actually shift to counteract the movement caused by camera shake.





Clear display: The 3-inch LCD has 460K dots and the built-in electronic viewfinder has 200K dots, allowing you to see clearly even on the sunniest of days.



manual, handheld night mode and a Face Beautifier function that smooths the skin to save time in editing. The Face Beautifier isn't as subtle as we'd like, however. Another annoyance is having to access aperture, shutter speed and ISO through the exposure compensation button, which proves frustrating if you're used to a control wheel, as well as time-consuming. White balance is accessed through the OK button, but the Auto setting produced accurate results.

While it comes with a clear electronic viewfinder, it's a shame that the LCD screen is fixed and there's no option to shoot in Raw, as competitors such as the Canon SX50 HS have these features for much more flexible shooting and editing in Photoshop. There are effects like fish eye and vignetting in-camera though, which save you editing time if you just want a quick effect. It also comes with 1080p Full HD video and a quick button on the back to switch to movie mode.

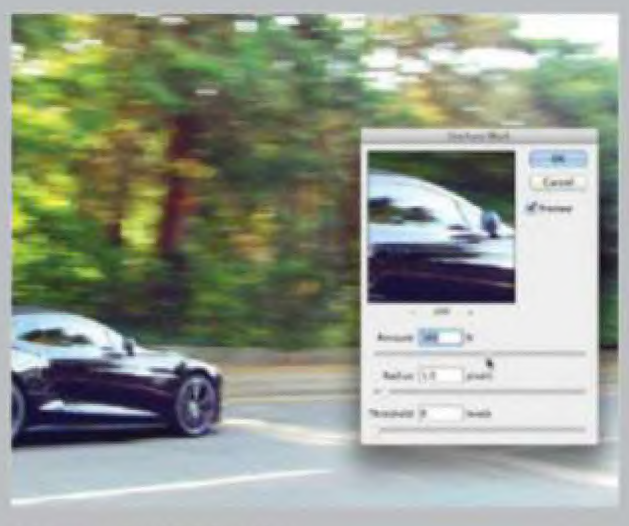
Whatever features it holds, however, the most important consideration is the image quality. Generally the XG-1 produced pleasing results with high dynamic range and plenty of detail. Colours were a bit flat and washed out, but there is the option to add a vivid digital filter, which helps to punch up the tones. Exposures were usually on point, but the camera favoured overexposing highlight detail in high contrast situations, which is harder to recover in Photoshop than underexposed shadows. Also, noise becomes noticeable after ISO 400, but is still usable at ISO 800. The quality of results from the lens were also solid, but we did experience some harsh lens flare in bright light and purple fringing in high contrast situations.

The XG-1 may have its flaws but the competitive price, solid feature set and versatility in a lightweight body may help to override many of its drawbacks.



04 | ENHANCE COLOURS

The XG-1 produces colours that are a little flat, so you may want to increase with Hue/Saturation. Also head to Curves to take even more control over the colour tones – select each individual colour channel from the drop-down menu and adjust the curve.



05 | SHARPEN UP

For crisp results, use the Unsharp Mask, setting the Radius between 1 and 2, keeping the Threshold below 20, and moving the Amount slider until you get the desired effect. It won't fix out-of-focus shots though, so keep as sharp as you can in-camera.

VERDICT

Features: **7/10**
Ease of use: **5/10**
Quality of results: **6/10**
Value for money: **8/10**

FINAL SCORE: 7/10

POWER MASK

DISCOVER AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD FOR MAKING COMPLEX CUTOUTS THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE WRANGLING WITH THE REFINE EDGE TOOL

www.digitalfilmtools.com

SPECIFICATIONS:

- **Adobe Photoshop CS3 and up**
- **Mac OS X 10.5 or later**
- **Windows XP or later**
- **1280x768 resolution or greater**

£95
$150

The thinking behind masking is to seamlessly compose one object, or picture, onto the background of another. Users of Photoshop CS5 and above will most likely already be familiar and proficient with using the Refine Edge tool and all the options involved in doing so. However, Digital Film Tools describes the Power Mask plug-in as "the first real-time, interactive tool capable of extracting almost any object in an image – even if you are dealing with fine hair detail, smoke, or reflections." Sounds familiar doesn't it? If you frequently work with layered files, you probably already spend enough time cutting out, masking and editing images in Photoshop.

On first look, Power Mask's interface does mimic Photoshop, by having a similar colour scheme. This is useful if continuity is important to you when switching between a plug-in and Photoshop. In order to open up the image into the plug-in, we first had to copy the layer and add a layer mask in Photoshop, and then find the plug-in via the Filter menu. Once in, there are numerous options to choose from, but a default brush is applied immediately so you can get started quickly. Drawing around an object is not difficult at all, but if you have a more complex area such as long hair to cut out, then it does give you the option to go back and make some tweaks later on in the masking process.

Once we had drawn out the object that we wanted to cut out, Power Mask created what is called a 'trimap'. This is a segmented image consisting of three regions, the foreground (your main subject), the background, and the unknown. The unknown is the section that is the trickiest to get right; nevertheless there are various options available to cover the difficult and intricate areas, without taking the background with you.

After applying changes in Power Mask, it overwrites the layer and layer mask in Photoshop. This leaves room to seamlessly compose the image

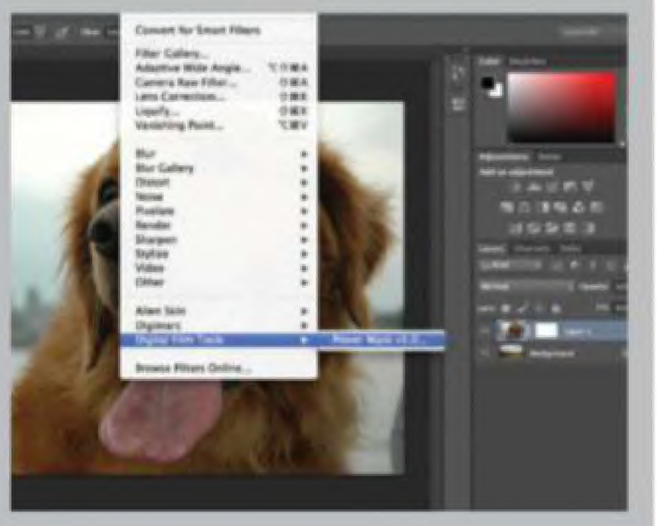
BASIC IMAGE EXTRACTION

USE POWER MASK TO CUT OUT ANY OBJECT OR PERSON AND PLACE THEM ONTO A DIFFERENT BACKGROUND



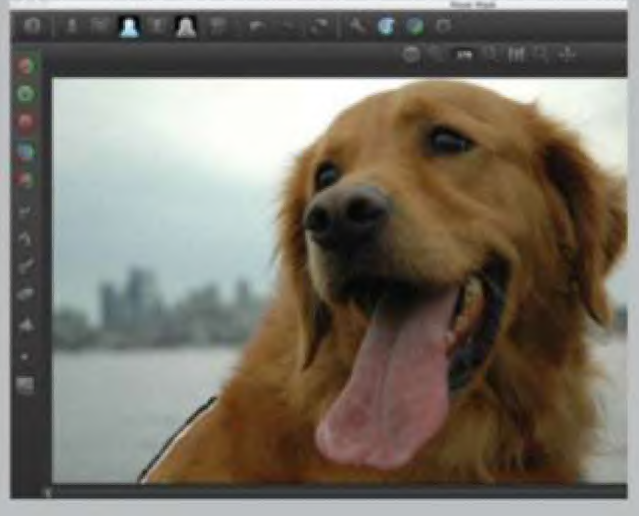
01 | LAYER MASK

Load the foreground and background images that you want to use in Photoshop. Click on the foreground image and go to Select>All, then Cmd/Ctrl+C followed by Cmd/Ctrl+V. This will copy and paste the image onto a new layer. Add a layer mask from the bottom of the Layers palette.



02 | OPEN POWER MASK

As you are now working on a multi-layered file, make sure that you have selected the top foreground image and not the white layer mask, then go to the Filters pull-down menu. Select Digital Film Tools followed by Power Mask v1.0.



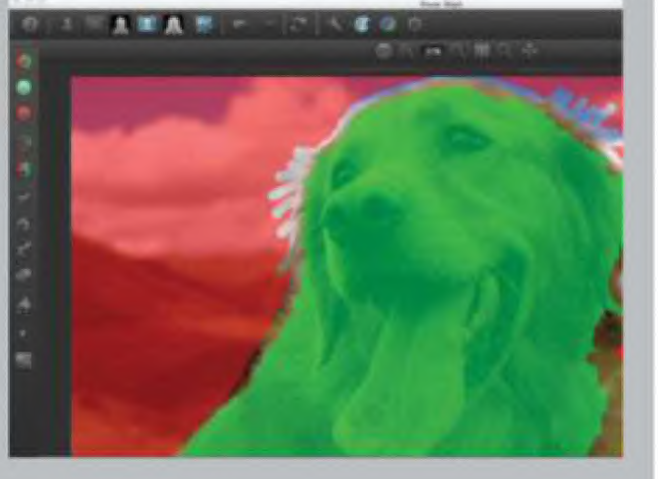
03 | START YOUR MASK

Select the Auto Paint option that looks like a wand. Draw clockwise around the object that you would like to cut out. Stop when you get to an 'Unknown area' where there isn't a definitive line between the foreground and background.



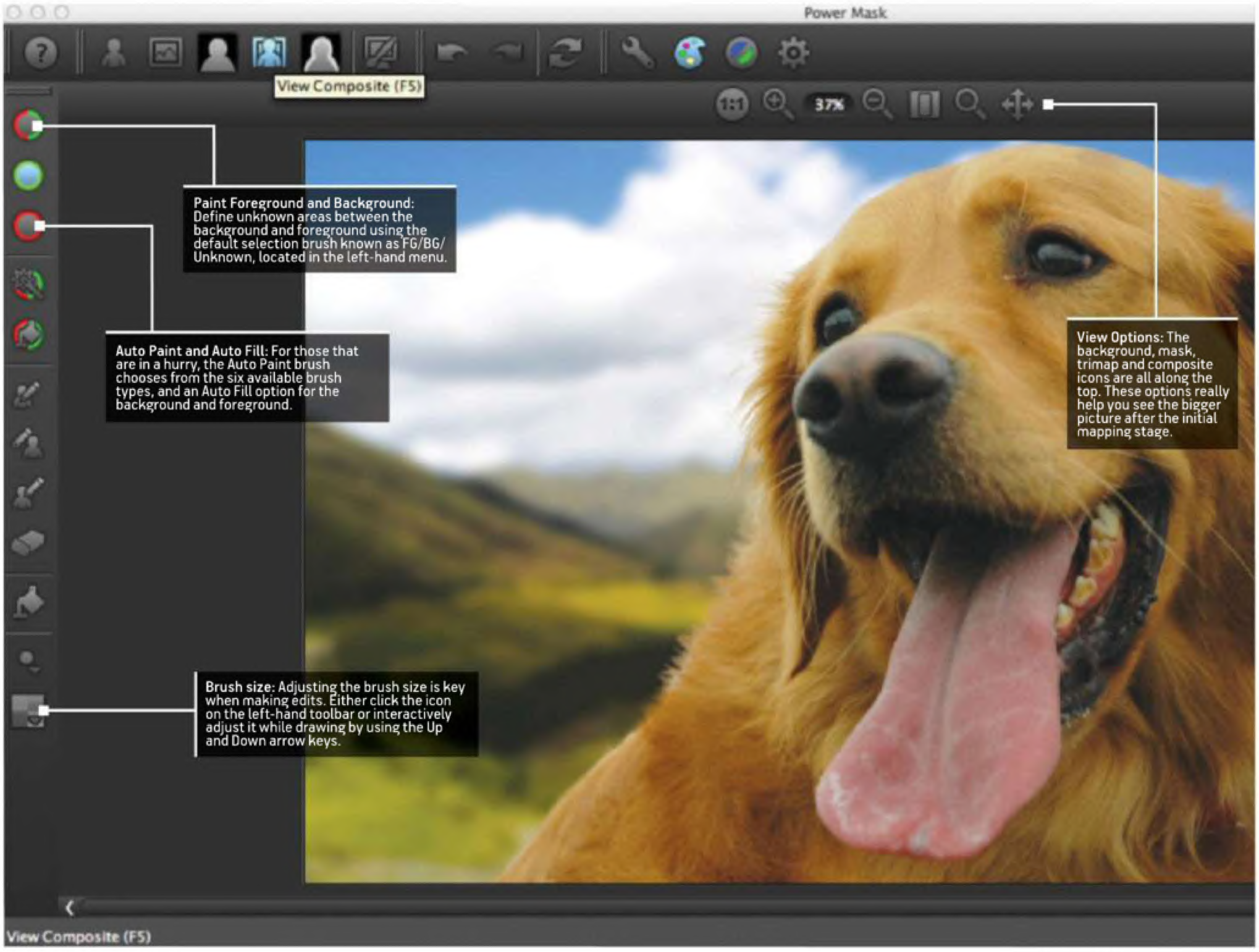
04 | TRICKY EDGES

For the areas with longer hair, increase the brush to 40 from the left-hand toolbar. For the tricky bits, place the cursor over the outside edge of the foreground and make sure that the cursor has turned red before painting outward to cover the hairs.



05 | FINISH UP

Select the Auto Fill option underneath the wand. This will produce a trimap. Click the Show Paint option from the top toolbar to see the new background underneath. Before clicking Done, check for any blank spots. If there are some, just go over with the Auto brush again.

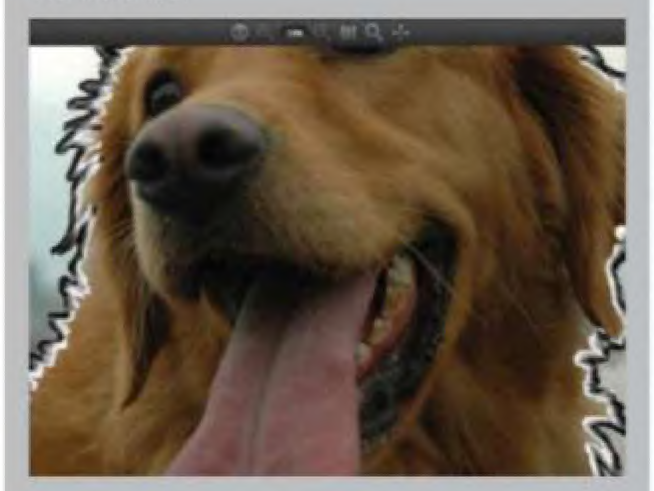


Power Mask: extract nearly every object or image with the power mask

STANDOUT FEATURE

REFINE EDGES SMOOTHLY WITH POWER MASK

Photoshop's Refine Edge tool does a good job of cutting out images, however, where hair is involved, Power Mask seems to be more a touch more effective. When tested under timed conditions, Power Mask was easier to use and produced superior results quickly. Surprised? We were too.



onto a new background, add filters or edit the image further. Once you download the software, Power Mask comes with a handy user guide including tips and tutorials, which may appeal to those who are unfamiliar with the extraction process. Although, one thing that is immediately noticeable, is that the plug-in is not at all compatible with Apple's Retina display. So if it is used on a high-resolution screen, it does stand out as being outdated.

At $150US, Power Mask is one of the more expensive plug-ins available on the market, and it can be argued that if you own Photoshop CS5 or above, you don't need to purchase this extra piece of software. However, we can't help but think that this plug-in (if you have money to spare) could be a handy addition to any workflow, as it not only speeds up your processes but produces great results – for not nearly as much effort. If it doesn't produce the result you were expecting, then you can always go in and edit the layer afterwards using Photoshop's filters or content-aware technology.

For those of you still working in older versions of Photoshop, the Power Mask plug-in could be a great solution to relieve you of your cutout woes.

VERDICT

Features: **7/10**
Ease of use: **6/10**
Quality of results: **8/10**
Value for money: **6/10**

FINAL SCORE: 7/10

PAINTING ABSTRACT LANDSCAPES

DIGITAL PAINTER, DANIEL SCHMELLING, DESCRIBES HOW HE USES PHOTOSHOP AND THE MIXER TOOL TO CREATE HIS STUNNING IMAGES

Painting landscapes is no mean feat, especially when using a tablet. For artist Daniel Schmelling, digital painting is where he feels most at home: "I got interested in digital painting when I studied at the Berliner Technische Kunstschule (BTK) in Berlin. During the fourth semester, I decided to take the digital illustration course and [it was] there that I learned the basics of working with Photoshop. After that, it was just constantly learning and exploring new painting techniques."

DO YOU CREATE DIGITAL ART FOR YOUR CAREER OR AS A HOBBY?

Both, I always think about creating new ideas and designs. Most of my spare time is taken up painting and retouching photographs, or creating graphic designs. I do create a lot of personal paintings and I recently started my own YouTube channel, so I can show people how I approach my images. I also get requests from independent authors, card game companies and other designers.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR GENERAL PAINTING STYLE?

I've never thought about describing my painting style. Some people say my style is similar to Richard Anderson and Levi Hopkins, but a number of my pictures have an abstract look. I think this is because the Mixer brush is one of my main tools, making my pictures have an oily, acrylic appearance.

WHY DO YOU FOCUS ON LANDSCAPES?

Landscapes are magical to me. They are like a person or a character, never the same and constantly changing. Even if you look at two mountain images with the same lighting, snow and trees, they are still so different. Painting landscapes and fantasy scenes is where I feel most at home.

WHICH IMAGE DO YOU FEEL MOST PROUD OF AND WHY?

I take pride in everything I create as long as I'm satisfied [with the end result]. If I had to pick one though, it's the painting [called] *Abstract Epic*



OUR READER
DANIEL SCHMELLING
www.schmellingdesign.de

All article images © Daniel Schmelling

> I do create a lot of personal paintings and I recently started my own YouTube channel so I can show people how I approach my images

Dawn: For *Dawn* I used the existing Photoshop colour palette and inserted in buildings from other photos. Then I painted over the photo textures with custom brushes and selected parts of the mountains to enlarge them

Abstract Epic Landscape: I tried to keep this image abstract, so I mostly used the Lasso Tool. To create the structures in the background, I took random selections from the original layer and warped the copied layers

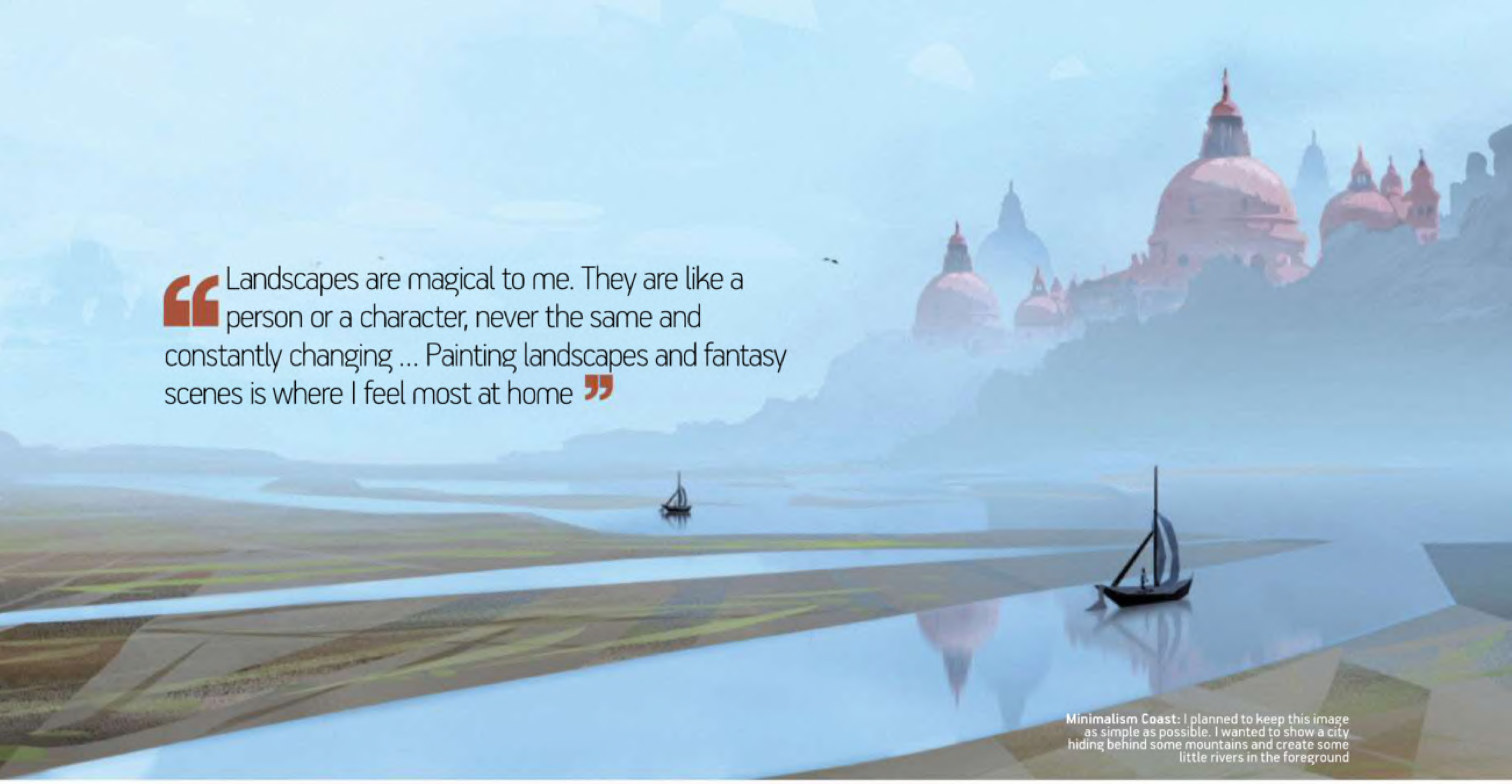
Nebula Painting: I have looked at many references of space nebulae. The image is inspired by the *Pillars of Creation* within the Eagle nebula. I used custom brushes of fire and smoke, and juggled with layer settings

Nebula clouds: Custom brushes created the clouds and ink splatter. In the brush settings, go to Shape Dynamics and play with random angles.

Lighting: The lighting was created using layer settings. Use Inner Shadow and Outer Glow for highlights. For shadows I used a soft round brush.

Stars: I took photos of the night sky and placed them on top, [then] set [the] night photo layers to Screen. The larger stars are made using custom brushes.

Colours: Use some layer settings like Hue/Saturation, and add a blue colour to the centre of the nebula to create more space.



Minimalism Coast: I planned to keep this image as simple as possible. I wanted to show a city hiding behind some mountains and create some little rivers in the foreground



Underwater Mountains: I took some pictures of aquaria and corals and worked with the mixer brush and Lasso tool. I used the Lasso tool to delimit the elements from the foreground to the background and also to enlarge the scene

DESIGN TIPS

1. Open up photo textures that you think might fit into the image.
2. Create rough sketch paintings to get the composition finished.
3. Make random selections from photo textures and warp them or just throw them in.
4. Do not be afraid of using photo textures as a tool.
5. Experiment with layer settings and play around with Hue/Saturation.
6. Smudge using the Mixer brush and experiment. However, control the tools you use to get nice results.
7. Copy and paste elements and warp them to create interesting shapes.
8. Always keep in mind where the light is coming from.
9. Use the Lasso tool to create nice, sharp edges.
10. Most importantly, have fun!

Colour Cliff: This painting is similar to *Paradise* without using any photo textures. I painted random brush strokes and pasted the layers, erasing elements from copied layers to get more detail. I used custom brushes of trees to add nature



Landscape, because it is one of the first images [I made] using the Selection and Lasso tools.

WHAT DO YOU MOST LIKE ABOUT USING PHOTOSHOP FOR YOUR WORK?

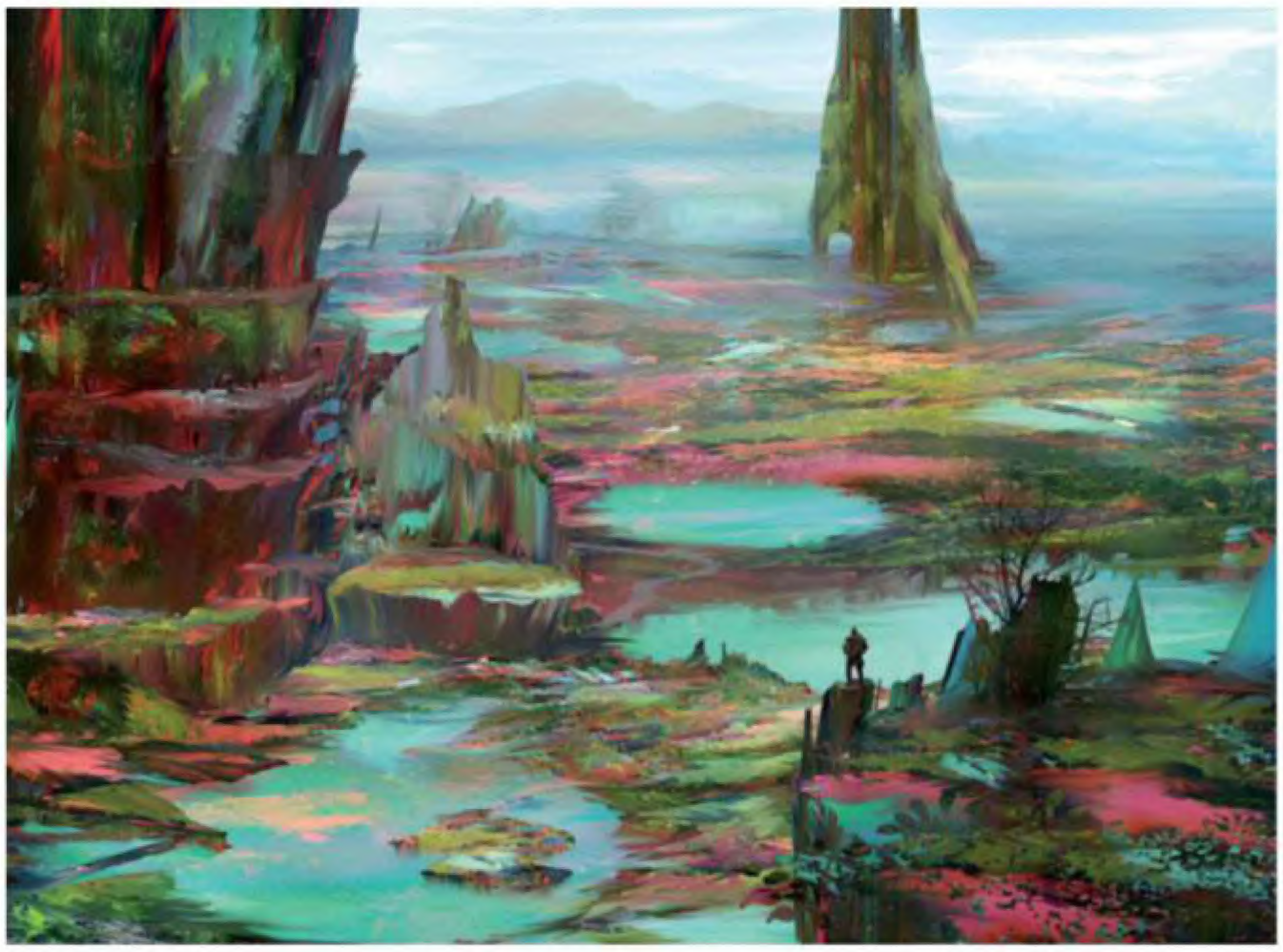
I mainly like the brush settings and how they interact with the graphics tablet's functions. Working with Photoshop opens so many doorways for [my] creativity. You can turn everything into a custom brush and just play around with every shape possible.

DO YOU USE ANY OTHER SOFTWARE PROGRAMS TO CREATE YOUR IMAGES?

I [mainly] use Photoshop, but I also use additional software from my DSLR camera and some plug-ins like Camera Raw. With Camera Raw, I edit a lot of photos, especially black and white pictures. From time to time I also use InDesign for graphic design.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST USEFUL PHOTOSHOP TOOL AND WHY?

In my opinion, the best tool is the Brush tool. It helps me not only for painting, but for retouching photos and cutting out images from the background. Depending





Paradise: I combined some aerial view textures and smudged them to get a more picturesque feeling. I then increased the Hue/Saturation and played with the Color Balance. I also added a human to give the viewer a familiar sight

Forest Mansion: I took a photo of a forest as a canvas and then created the feeling of a lonely mansion's backyard in the middle of the forest. I used tree brushes to add more details, a Mixer brush for painting effects and fog to mimic atmosphere

on how I use it, the Brush tool makes [my general] workflow so much easier.

HOW DO YOU CREATE YOUR COLOURFUL AND VIBRANT LANDSCAPES?

I use the Mixer brush to paint on top of photo textures to get the smudged look. I create the colour combinations using a variety of tools [including] the Mixer brush, the Lasso tool, brushes, the Eraser tool, Transformation and layer settings. I always increase Saturation and play around with Hue and Color Balance.

WHAT WOULD BE THE IDEAL PROJECT FOR YOU TO WORK ON?

That depends on the project in question, be it designing book covers, illustrations, photography or graphic design. I think an ideal project for me to work on would definitely be something that allows me to be creative.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR OTHER ARTISTS LOOKING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK?

In my opinion, [you primarily need] the passion and patience for digital art, because there are often ups and downs. Sometimes I have had creative block, not knowing what to paint. Therefore the most important advice I have is to experiment, explore, and have fun. Watch and analyse video tutorials like *Feng Zhu Design Cinema* on YouTube, because that was one source from which I learnt the most.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS?

Have patience. Do what you do best and pursue your strengths. Hobbies are very helpful to gain inspiration and to relax your mind. One thing I do is play bass guitar, it helps me to [think of] new ideas for design.

Giant Chains: This picture is a little bit inspired by the movie *Hellraiser,* where chains have a prominent role. Due to the rust, the water is severely discoloured and reminiscent of blood. The human shows the enormous size of the chains

CUSTOM LEAF TEXTURES

LEARN HOW TO TRANSFORM LEAVES INTO STUNNING DIGITAL DESIGN ELEMENTS

Leaves are an amazing natural occurrence. These little miracles of photosynthesis grow by the billions and are cast off each year in the autumn. Each one is as unique as a snowflake, yet similar enough that they can act like a fingerprint from the type of tree they come from. Not only do leaves provide the essential, life giving dressing of a tree, they also add a natural warmth and earthy resonance to a digital design.

Drawing individual leaves can be time consuming and tedious, but there's no reason to illustrate thousands of leaves by hand when there is an abundance of the real item surrounding you. In this project we will show you how to best treat and digitise various types and shapes of leaves to use in your compositions.

After working through the projects, load the resources from FileSilo, start using the leaf brushes and stock right away. Also, be sure to check out the corresponding video tutorial where we delve into the new Render Tree filter in Photoshop CC 2014.

BASIC LEAF PHOTOGRAPHY

HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH LEAVES FOR USE IN PHOTOSHOP



01 | HUNT AND GATHER

Search for the leaves you want to use. Try to find a variety of types, sizes, and colours. The wider assortment you find, the larger your library will be.



02 | PRESS THE LEAVES

Soon after gathering your leaves, find a book to press them. Place a couple on a page, then close the book and put it under some heavy objects. Leave it for a few days.



03 | PHOTOGRAPH OR SCAN

Photograph or scan your leaves on a white background with even lighting. Since the leaves are so flat already, photographing them will work just as well as scanning.

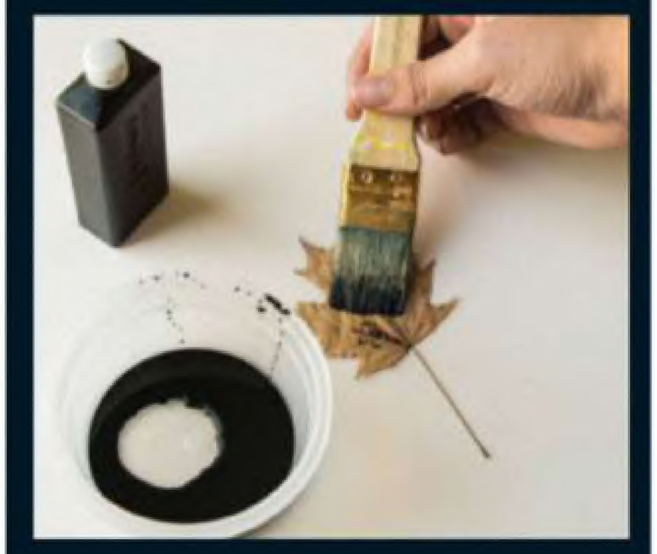
LEAF PRINTS FOR TEXTURES

LEARN HOW TO MAKE LEAF PRINTS FOR USE IN PHOTOSHOP



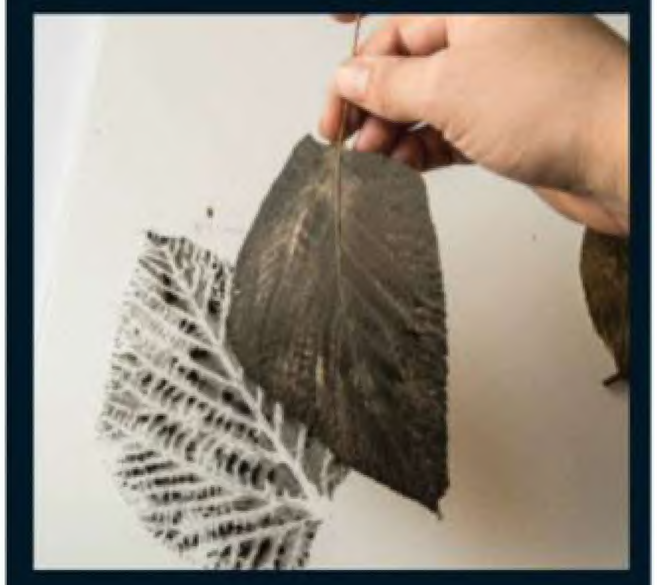
01 | SUPPLIES

You will only need a few things for this: your pressed leaves, a paintbrush, some India ink or a stamp pad, and smooth paper on which to stamp your leaves.



02 | PAINTING THE LEAVES BLACK

Dilute the ink slightly and paint it onto the backs of the leaves. The backs have the most texture and will transfer better. Make sure you get ink in every part of the leaf.



03 | STAMP

Lay the leaf ink-side down on the paper. Dab the back with a towel to transfer it cleanly. Then peel the leaf up by the stem to reveal your print.

HOW TO MAKE A LEAF BRUSH

QUICKLY TURN YOUR LEAF PHOTOS INTO BRUSHES

Start by opening your image. Desaturate it and then adjust the levels until you're satisfied with the contrast. Save it as a brush preset and name it accordingly.

Make sure the picture you select is free from distractions, like a cluttered background or too many shadows. Crop as close to the leaf as possible to lessen the chance of distractions.

Desaturate the image. Remember that only the dark parts will be visible as a brush, so experiment to make sure your images have enough range of value in black and white.



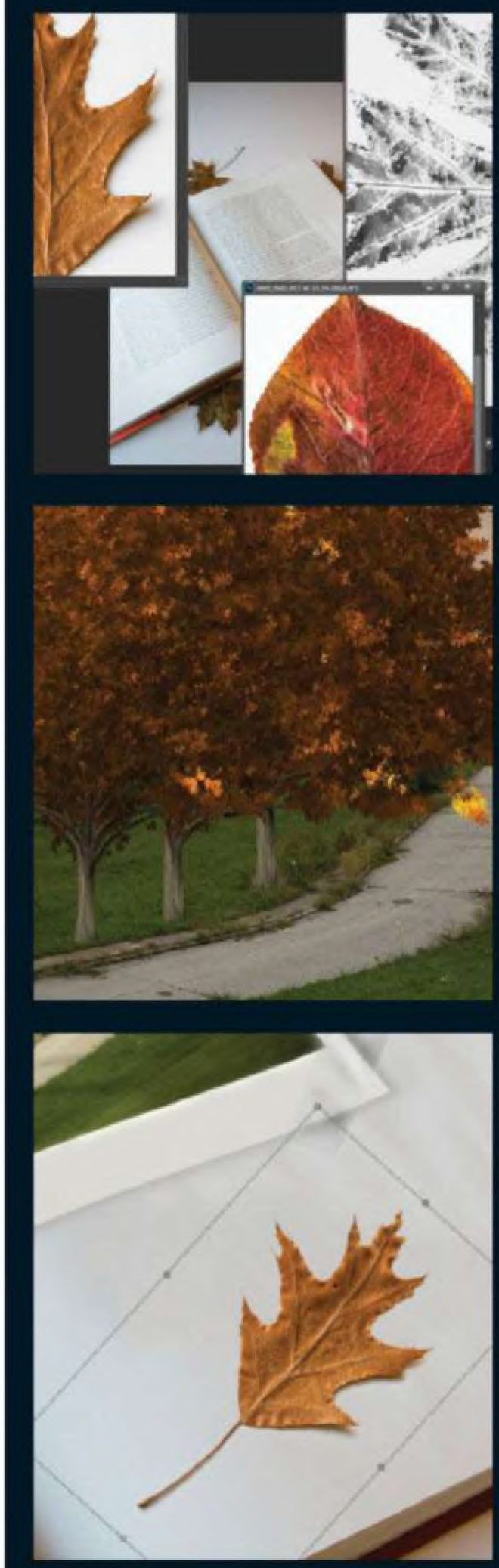
Play with the levels until you like the contrast. Make sure the background is pure white or it will show up as a box around your leaf when you turn it into a brush.

Save as a brush preset in your Edit menu. Make sure your image is high resolution so your brush is a decent, useable size. Also test the brush to make sure it's correct.

LEAF-THEMED SCRAPBOOK PAGE

MAKE A THEMED SCRAPBOOK PAGE USING THESE ASSETS

Working with digitised paint splashes can be a lot of fun, and bring a much needed addition of visual interest to an otherwise somewhat bland design. In this example, we began with an attractive text design. The placement and colours are good, yet still fairly boring and plain. However, adding a slightly tilted angle to the camera view, along with several paint splash and splatters for texture, creates a visually compelling and interesting piece. These paint splashes can be used as simple layers and positioned precisely, but that frequently defeats the purpose of adding an element of randomness. Using the splashes as brushes allows the use of the scattering, angle jitters and flip jitters from the brush properties to create chaotic sprays of paint spots. Be sure to still use layers for blending modes and matching the sprays to the perspective of the scene. Then you will be able to see just how much more exciting a design can be, if everything isn't so perfect and pristine!





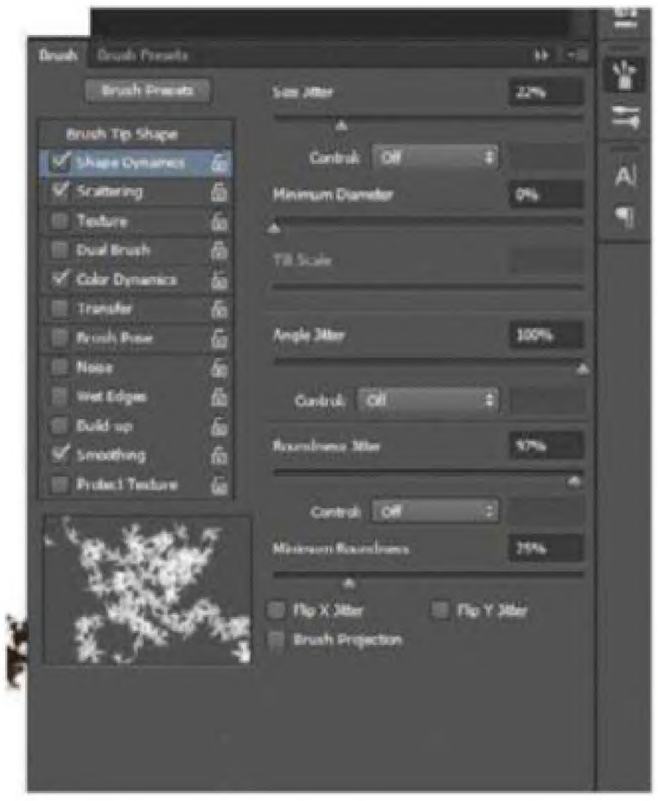
ENHANCING RENDERED TREES

COMBINING BRUSHES AND THE RENDER TREE FILTER



01 GROW THE TREE

With the Render Tree filter, create a tree to match one of the leaves you collected earlier. Colour the leaves similarly by sampling the colour from the leaf photo and transferring it to the rendered tree.



02 CREATE FOLIAGE

Once you've rendered your tree, select your brush. Adjust the settings so it brushes on randomly with variations of colour, angle, size and jitter. Then adjust the size to match the leaves on the tree.



03 ENHANCE THE TREE

Brush the leaves all around the tree to give it more realistic foliage. Play with blend modes to see which fits best. Color Dodge combined with Darken works well.

FileSilo

LEAF IMAGES

16 LEAF RESOURCE PHOTOS

Enjoy these 16 high resolution stock shots of various leaves. Use them for brushes, textures, or just individual elements.



LEAF BRUSHES

15 LEAF BRUSHES

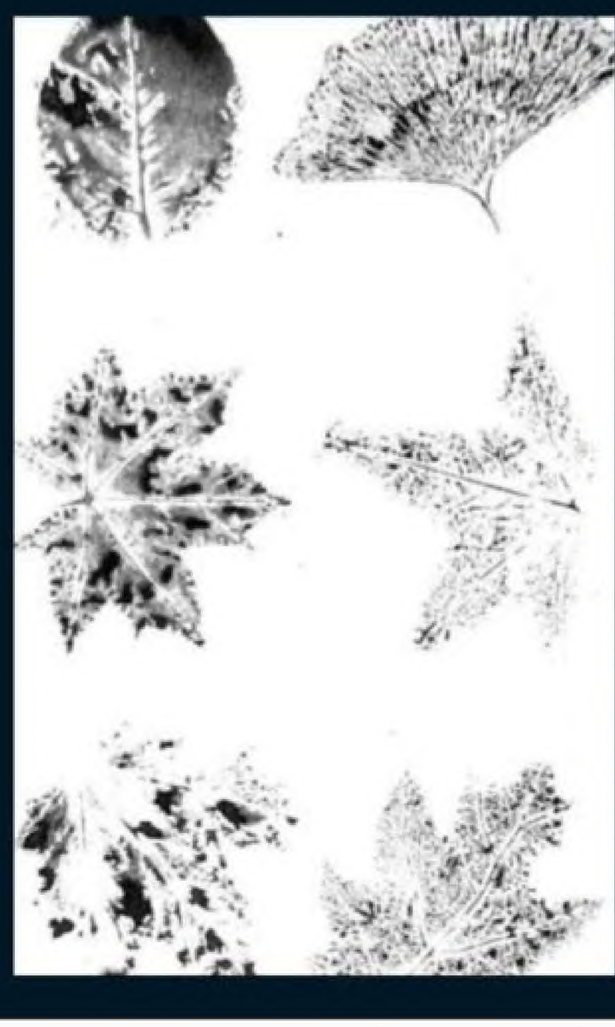
We've gone ahead and converted the leaf stock into easy to use brushes for you! Just load the 'LeafBrushes.abr' file to add them to your Brush Presets.



LEAF PRINT BRUSHES

9 LEAF PRINT BRUSHES

The 'LeafPrintBrushes.abr' are scans of the inked and printed leaves from the project. The scans are then turned into brushes for your easy convenience to add some natural grunge effect to your designs.



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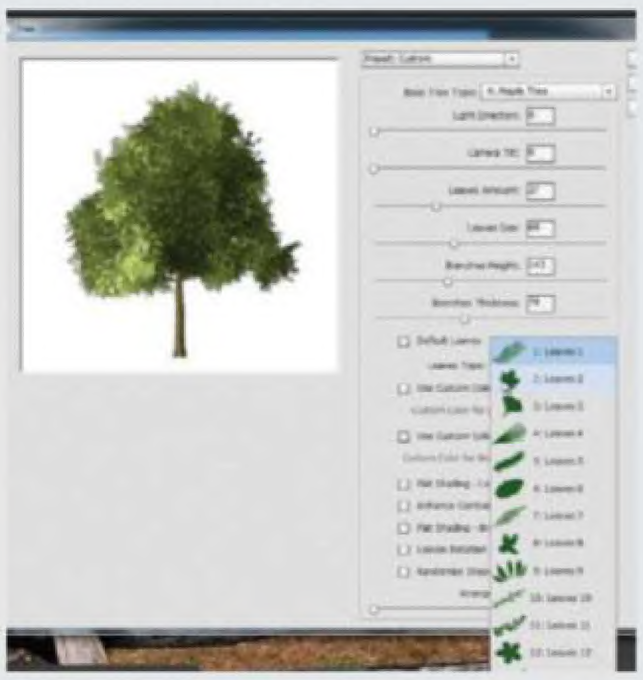
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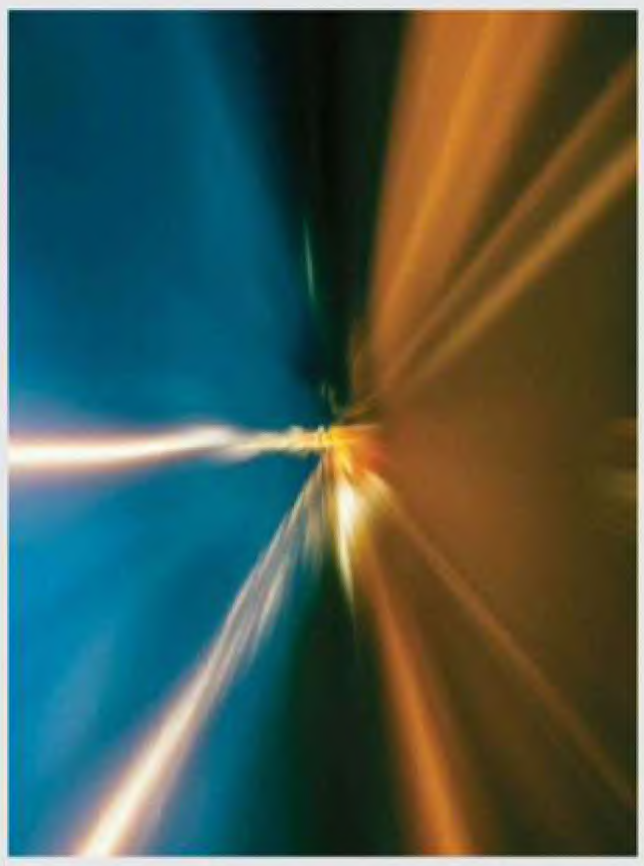
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105 PRO TEXTURES

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- 105 premium textures worth $63
- Winter stock photos worth $15
- Video tutorial on how to use the Render Tree filter in CC from expert Kirk Nelson
- 20 glitter paper textures worth $12
- Bokeh set, grunge backgrounds and more
- All tutorial files for this issue

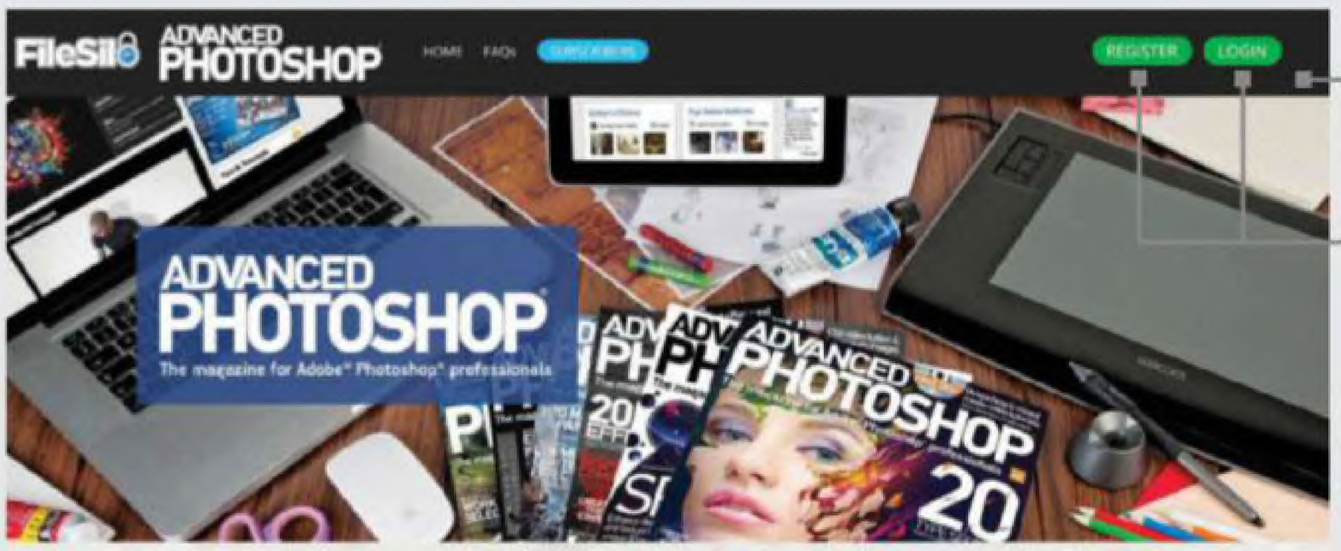
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